BLOOD AND TEARS

J. M. DEB

IND KITABS BOMBAY

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PUBLISHERS : : BOMBAY

Rs. 7-8

First Published, December 1945

Printed by B. G. Dhawale, at the Karnatak Printing Press, Chira Bazar, Bombay 2 and published by V. Kulkarni, Hind Kitabs, 107 Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bombay

TO MY FATHER

Whose blessings and memory have guided me through storms and stress

PREFACE

The path of a journalist is no bed of roses. In the daily hurly-burly of a crowded existence he comes across much that is drab and dull, but more that is exciting and leaves a lasting impression upon his mind. His experiences are so varied and so complex that to collect and compile them calls for such ample leisure as a journalist unfortunately lacks. And yet there are certain things that touch him deeply and cannot easily be brushed aside, which he treasures up until an opportune moment offers itself for their presentation. The Indian situation in the setting of World War II is one such which demands immediate attention.

Great hopes were aroused when the Indian National Congress, after considerable heart-searching and assessment of the circumstances then prevailing, agreed to accept office under the Crown. The Congress Ministers did well during their two and half years' tenure, and their innumerable constructive activities were eulogised by their respective Provincial Satraps, by the Secretary of State for India and by other responsible members of His Majesty's Government. Yet when war broke out on September 3, 1939, India was dragged into it without even a formal consultation with the popular Ministries or the legislatures of the country. The events of the next six years of the war only underline this flagrant flouting of the national will. In this book I have tried in my own way to draw a picture of this lamentable exhibition of bankruptcy of statesmanship as dispassionately as possible. I have also attempted to show how the great opportunities that the war provided were utterly neg-

lected by the Powers-that-be, and how in spite of the blood and tears she shed, India remained practically where she had been before the war, in striking contrast to the tremendous progress made by other powerful nations of the world.

The book does not claim to be a complete treatise on the complex problems of Indian life, although an attempt has been made to analyse her political life, her social disequilibrium, her industrial stagnation and the sad tale of the Indian Press under an alien Government. Such an effort is difficult because of the inadequacy of available material ; and my impending visit to London hardly left me time to do full justice to the vast subject I had undertaken to handle. This work only gives a short, objective account of the striking ravages wrought by the second World War on Indian life.

I have purposely laid greater stress on the political problem as I think the success of any country—in whatever direction—depends increasingly on its political status. The war has created many new problems in India, and now with the end of hostilities, post-war reconstruction is engaging the attention of her people. India wants to secure a much larger share of prosperity than she has hitherto known. To this end, she has to rebuild her house completely ; the country has to be lifted out of the political mire into which she has been dragged by a long period of foreign domination, and out of that misery and helplessness brought on by a global war. In this effort, a retrospect of happenings in India during the six eventful years of the war, may provide certain bases for a dispassionate examination of the complex problems of a vast country.

In a work like this which deals mostly with the wartime political life of our country, it is perhaps inevitable

that I should offend certain political leaders and their parties by a frank expression of my views. If anything in these pages should give offence, I must explain that I have set down naught in malice. My only purpose has been to embody in permanent form the result of long and painstaking study.

My thanks are due to my many friends who have helped me in this manuscript with their valued ideas and suggestions. But to Mr B. Sen Gupta, my revered 'Chief' I owe more, much more, than formal thanks. It was he who moulded my life from its very beginning and it was to him I have looked for inspiration and guidance all these years. A formal expression of gratitude is but a poor return for his unbounded kindness.

Bombay, J. M. Deb
1st December, 1945

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He who is not free is not a man; he who is not free has no sight, no knowledge, no discernment, no growth, no comprehension, no will, no faith, no love; he has no wife, he has no children : he has a female and young ones ; he lives not, 'ab luce principium'. Liberty is the apple of the eye. Liberty is the visual organ of progress.

—Victor Hugo

CHAPTER I

THE NEW PHASE

When on that fateful day of September 1, 1939, German troops crossed the Polish Frontier and German aeroplanes began the bombarding of Polish towns few people realized that the evil effects of this holocaust would be felt in the far-off land of India in little over two years' time. India did escape the ravages of the first World War and the thought naturally came to one's mind that by another stroke of luck the Indian soil might be left undefiled by the jack-boot of the invader, though she could not possibly escape the general effect of the war. The quietude of Japan at the moment lent colour to this belief. Situated as she is geographically, India stood the risk of being the actual battleground only in the event of Japan's entry into the war against Great Britain. As things stood then, such a contingency was not considered to be within the range of possibility. Japan had struck at China in 1937 hoping to seize a big prize by a quick victory. But contrary to all expectations the Chinese rallied round the banner of Marshal Chiang Kai-shek and arrested the onward march of the invader. One, two, three years passed ; still Japan was nowhere near victory. It was in such circumstances that the European war broke out. This supported the general belief that Japan would not dare to embroil herself in a war with two of the most powerful nations in the world—Great Britain and the U. S. A.—and thus spoil the chances of victory even in China.

But strange is the way of war ! Events that followed

belied all optimism and we saw mighty forces gradually getting to grips with each other and a dreadful war darkening the horizon. The agonized cry of the weak nations struggling for existence rent the sky as the strong, in their mad rush of Fascist exploitation and selfish aggrandisement crunched them beneath their unrelenting advance. Aggressive Imperialism stepped in and vast armed camps arose in preparation for what appeared to be inevitably a prolonged struggle. And behind it all a decaying economic order intensified all these conflicts.

India did not escape the effects of these world upheavals. Soon she became the target of attack from her far eastern neighbour and its inevitable effect was manifest everywhere. Whether in the economic sphere, or in the social life or in the larger domain of politics that war had its disastrous consequences. Various industries sprang up everywhere in the country and with them profiteering, black-marketing and hoarding raised their ugly heads all around to the detriment of the average consumer. Government promulgated Ordinances after Ordinances—some of them belated—to control all illegal trade transactions, hundreds of control orders were issued and thousands of new posts created to execute the wartime restrictions imposed by the Government. Modifications and revisions to these Orders were made from time to time as the occasion and circumstances demanded, but if anything, they made things worse. Every new control order rather tended to extend opportunities for black market and corruption which are rampant throughout the country. The people paid with their life for this official incompetence. Bengal came under the grip of a famine, unprecedented in the history of India. Even the casualty figures of the war pale into insignificance before the toll in human life exacted by the Bengal famine. This un-

fortunate lot was not Bengal's alone. Travancore, Cochin, Malabar, Orissa and the Ceded Districts fared no better. Even before the war, there was scarcity of food and clothing in the country. The stoppage of imports, as a result of the war, the inadequacy of transport facilities and wartime migration of population from rural to urban areas added to the difficulties of an already deteriorating situation. The crying need of the people was food and then clothing. But what did Mr Amery, the then Secretary of State do to improve the situation? When the deaths from famine were counted by thousands, he blandly told Parliament that there was no famine in India and attributed India's ills to over-population! In India Lord Linlithgow remained self-complacent and took no effective step to stop the rot. Lord Wavell on his taking over, no doubt, egged on the military to the job and in Bengal at least the situation eased. But in other provinces there was no perceptible improvement.

The political situation was no better. The national demand for the declaration of India's independence was daily becoming insistent and neither the Congress, nor the Muslim League was prepared to offer their willing co-operation in the Government's war efforts. Meanwhile war clouds darkened the eastern horizon; Singapore, Malaya, and Burma fell to the aggressor Japan.

Then came Sir Stafford Cripps, the Lord Privy Seal, who after three weeks' unsuccessful negotiations left India to the dismay and disappointment of millions in this country. The national leaders remained in prison during the major part of the time the war was on, following the adoption of the August Resolution, and a deep-rooted frustration seized the country. Three long years thus passed by. At last in June 1945, after the termination of the European war, Lord Wavell brought a new offer to

India and with its announcement the top-rank leaders of the Congress were set free. But the Wavell Plan went the way the Cripps offer did three years ago.

The Indian Press was smarting under the heavy restrictions imposed on it immediately after the outbreak of the war. The censorship was not based on grounds of security alone. Even news that could be of no value to the enemy was suppressed in the name of military security. The imposition of new and humiliating restrictions on the Press brought together even those Indian Editors who held opinions widely divergent on political matters, and the All-India Newspaper Editors Conference was constituted for safe-guarding the valuable rights and privileges of the Fourth Estate.

In short, in every walk of life in India the war left its indelible impress. In the next few chapters we shall analyse the effects of the war on India's political life.

CHAPTER II

THE PROTEST

Since the days of non-co-operation in 1921 popular discontent at British rule had been growing in the country. This reached its climax in 1939; never in the history of British connexion with India was there greater opposition to the policies of the Government than at the outbreak of World War II. What was the reason for this intense anti-British feeling? The answer is not far to seek. The powers-that-be had shown throughout an arrogant and contemptuous indifference to India's political aspirations. The memory of the broken promises of the British Government—solemn undertakings given by eminent statesmen during the first World War—was still vivid in the minds of Indians. The part played by Britain in the international stage in the years immediately preceding the second World War—her betrayal of Abyssinia, her open support to Fascist France and her share in the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia—had not increased British prestige in the eyes of Indians.

The first to give expression to this discontent was the Indian National Congress. The Congress has been closely watching every development in international politics. When the situation reached a critical stage in late July, 1939, and threatened to develop any moment into a major conflict, the Congress Working Committee gave their earnest consideration to the situation and to the danger of war that overhung the world. The Committee took stock of every conceivable aspect of the situation and enunciated its policy in the event of a war. In clear and

categorical terms it declared its unflinching determination to oppose all attempts to impose a war on India against her will or without the consent of her people.

The Committee was forced to take that attitude because the past record of the British Government and her recent policies demonstrated clearly that she paid only lip-service to freedom and democracy and might betray them any moment. 'India,' said the resolution, 'cannot associate herself with such a Government or be asked to give her resources for democratic freedom which is denied to her and which is likely to be betrayed.' But the British Government in India went its own way. Indian troops were despatched to Egypt, Aden and Singapore in defiant disregard of the wishes of the Central Assembly that no Indian troops should be sent abroad without the consent of the Legislature. This was an insidious attempt to drag India irrevocably into a war which was threatening to break out any moment, without consulting her, even as a matter of formality. Resentment rose to the highest pitch in the country and Lord Zetland in an attempt to explain away this wanton flouting of public opinion said in the House of Lords: 'This action was taken on the urgent advice of the highest naval and military authorities. The situation at that time was such that the possibility of a threat to the safety of India, both from West and from East, could not be excluded and from the military point of view it was essential that the Western and Eastern approaches to India should be adequately defended. It would clearly have been the height of folly to have given the world by discussion in the legislature advance notice of our military dispositions.'

This, however, did not carry much conviction with the Congress High Command. History of the recent past was full of examples showing open defiance of even the

modest demands of the Indians and the constant cleavage between the spoken word, the ideals proclaimed and the real motives and objectives. Rightly indeed Aldous Huxley has criticized the ethical standards of the Englishman which undergo a profound change as they pass from the atmosphere of their own country to that of their conquered and military-occupied Indian Empire. Says Huxley : 'Things which would be absolutely unthinkable at home are not only thinkable, but doable and actually done in India.'

As a first step, towards recording their protest, the Working Committee called upon all Congress members of the Central Assembly to refrain from attending the next session of the Assembly. They further instructed the Congress Ministers in the eight provinces not to be a party to the war preparations of the British Government.

All this happened before the war actually broke out.

On September 3, 1939, Mr Neville Chamberlain, whose policy of appeasement had brought Europe to the brink of the catastrophe, broadcast to the British people that Britain was at war with Germany. The Viceroy of India followed this up with a broadcast of his own. Four hundred million people were thus plunged into a war at the arbitrary word of an alien ruler! India witnessed the paradox of a declaration of a war for the avowed purpose of safe-guarding the freedom of mankind and the promulgation of Ordinances and Acts destroying every vestige of civil liberty on her own soil.

The Viceroy in a message to the people of India made a fervent appeal for wholesale mobilization of India's resources for fighting for 'human freedom as against the rule of force'. His Excellency also sent an urgent invitation to Mahatma Gandhi to discuss with him the new situation. The invitation was promptly accepted

and within forty-eight hours of the declaration of the war they were in close consultation. The outcome of the interview was given by Gandhiji himself. 'I have returned from the Viceregal Lodge empty-handed', he said, 'and without any understanding, open or secret.' He, however, stated that if there should be any understanding, it should be between the Congress and the Government. The attitude of the Congress could be anticipated.

In an interview to the Press on September 8, 1939, at Rangoon on his way from China Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, that dynamic personality of the Congress, gave an indication of the Congress stand. He stated: 'It is true that in a conflict between Democracy and freedom on the one side and Fascism and aggression on the other, our sympathies must inevitably lie on the side of democracy and we cannot tolerate with pleasure ideas of victory for the Fascist and Imperialist aggressors. But mere repetition of phrases about democracy and freedom does not mean that the struggle is for democracy. The last war showed that and the past years demonstrated still more how democracy can be betrayed in the name of peace and freedom. The real test as to whether the struggle is for democracy and freedom does not lie in loud enunciations of principles, but in practice. If England stands for self-determination the proof of that should be India.'

The Working Committee met at Wardha on September 8, and after five days' prolonged discussions for over thirty hours issued a lengthy statement surveying the whole war situation and the policy of the British Government towards India. The Committee disapproved the carrying out, by Indian people, of orders issued by an external authority and called upon the British Government to give immediate effect in India to its professions

about democracy to the largest possible extent in order to convince the people of India of the sincerity of their declaration. The Committee, however, did not take a final decision on its attitude to the war as it awaited authoritative clarification on the issues at stake, the real objectives and the position of India in the present and in the future. 'The Working Committee invite the British Government to declare in unequivocal terms what their war aims are in regard to democracy and imperialism and the new order that is envisaged, in particular, how these aims are going to apply to India and to be given effect to in the present.' This decision was subsequently ratified by the All-India Congress Committee on October 9.

In the meanwhile, the Viceroy invited leaders of Indian public opinion including the representatives of the Congress and the Muslim League and carried on negotiations with them on the various issues arising out of the situation and on October 18, issued a statement announcing the results of his talks, and the reply of His Majesty's Government to the national demand. 'I am authorised by His Majesty's Government to say,' declared Lord Linlithgow, 'that at the end of the war they will be very willing to enter into consultation with representatives of the several communities, parties and interests in India, and with the Indian Princes, with a view to securing their aid and co-operation in the framing of such modifications of the Government of India Act, 1935, as may be desirable.' The Governor-General, however, emphasized the conditions that had to be fulfilled before such a modification took place. 'But I would urge that it is essential in matter of this nature, affecting the future of tens of millions of people, affecting the relations of the great communities, affecting the Princes of India, affecting the immense commercial and industrial enterprises, whether

Indians or Europeans in this country, that the largest measure of agreement practicable should be achieved.' This proviso, subtle and ingenious as it was, took away by the left hand what little was given by the right. Instead of meeting the national demand squarely and fairly the Viceroy announced his intention of establishing a 'Consultative Group, representative of all major political parties in India and of the Indian Princes' which would have as its object the association of public opinion in India with the conduct of the war and with questions relating to war activities.

The Viceregal pronouncement shocked nationalist India which was expecting a change of heart of the authorities faced as they were with unprecedented calamities. Mahatma Gandhi voiced the intensity of nationalist feeling at that moment when he stated: 'The Congress asked for bread and it has got a stone.' The Congress President, Dr Rajendra Prasad, was equally disappointed. 'There is no room now left,' he averred, 'for any one to doubt that the policy remains what it has always been and that all talk about democracy and resistance to aggression is not meant to apply to India.' Pandit Nehru and Maulana Azad also were of the same view. 'The hand of friendship that the Congress had extended to the British people in the hour of world crisis has been spurned by their Government.' The Congress Working Committee met at Wardha on October 22 and 23 and in the face of Britain's obstinate attachment to her old imperialist policy had no alternative but to call upon the Congress Ministers to dissociate themselves from the Government by tendering their resignations. At the same time it stressed the view that any resistance that the Congress might offer must be free from all violence.

CHAPTER III

THE NEXT STEP

The resignations of the Congress Ministries in as many as eight provinces out of eleven after two and a half years of an unbroken record of efficient service created a first class constitutional crisis in India and a great sensation in England and elsewhere. The British Government, in the plethora of speeches and statements made by their spokesmen in the British Parliament, tried to shift the responsibility for the deadlock on the Congress. 'I claim that our position is as sound as a bell,' said Sir Samuel Hoare in a statement in the House of Commons on behalf of His Majesty's Government on a debate on India raised by Mr Wedgwood Benn, former Secretary of State for India, on October 26, 1939. 'In good faith and perfect sincerity,' he added, 'we have started India on the greatest constitutional experiment that the world had ever seen.' This statement shocked even the most moderate among India's politicians. What was the 'greatest constitutional experiment' that was started in India? It was a reiteration of the same old promise of 'reconsideration of the constitutional problem at the end of the war' and the formation of a 'Consultative Committee' during the war! The problem of the minorities had always been a good excuse for perpetuating the British hold on India and once again it was made a scapegoat to continue the 'status quo' and prevent India's advance to freedom.

The Congress Ministries had come and gone. The British Government had given their reply. What next?

Would the Congress launch another Civil Disobedience Movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi? They did so in 1921 and in 1931. Would history repeat itself? These were the questions that occupied the Indian mind in those days of hectic excitement.

The Congress declared that it would continue to explore the means of arriving at an honourable settlement, even though the British Government had banged the door. Meanwhile Congressmen were advised to organize themselves as a well-disciplined army and consolidate every ounce of their strength to carry on a campaign of Civil Disobedience Movement if the Congress was forced to launch such a movement. It was hoped that all Congress organizations would, by a vigorous prosecution of the constructive programme enunciated by the Mahatma, prove themselves fit to take up the call when it came.

Then came the Ramgarh session of the Congress in March 1940. The Congress once again declared that nothing short of complete independence would be acceptable to the people of India. The average Congressmen became almost impatient for direct action and insisted that it should be started at once for the attainment of India's complete independence. The plenary session was influenced by this widespread insistence and declared that the preliminary step of non-co-operation with the Government, which the Congress had by then adopted, 'must naturally be followed by Civil Disobedience, to which the Congress will unhesitatingly resort as soon as the Congress organization is considered fit enough for the purpose, or in case circumstances so shape themselves as to precipitate a crisis.'

Gandhiji was made the 'General' of any contemplated movement. He returned to Sevagram and from his Ashram there he issued instructions about the 'Next

Step'. He asked every Congress Committee in the country to be a Satyagraha Committee. The British Government was by no means slow in thought or deed. It threatened grim punishment if civil disobedience was launched.

Meanwhile, things were not going well for the Allies in Europe. To the surprise and dismay of the world, France the most valued ally of Britain sued for peace on June 17, 1940, and the Franco-German armistice was signed on June 23. This new development in the European war situation was responsible for a change in the Congress position in its relation to Gandhiji. The Congress felt that it should make allowance for the imperfections and failings of human elements in any struggle it might launch. It felt that perfect non-violence might not be maintained. The Congress candidly declared that they were 'unable to go to the full length with Gandhiji and therefore absolved him from responsibility for the programme and activity which the Congress had to pursue under the conditions then prevailing in India and the world in regard to external aggression and internal disorder.' This decision was reached in Wardha where the Working Committee met in June, 1940. At its next meeting at Delhi in July the Committee reiterated its demand for a recognition by Great Britain of complete independence of India and stated that as an immediate step in giving effect to it, a provisional National Government should be constituted at the Centre which 'though formed as a transitory measure, should be such as to command the confidence of all the elected elements in the Central Legislature and secure the closest co-operation of the responsible Governments in the provinces.' 'If these measures were adopted,' the Committee unequivocally assured for the first time, 'it will enable the Congress to throw in its full weight in the efforts for the effective organization of

the defence of the country.' This was subsequently confirmed by the A. I. C. C. at Poona on July 28, 1940, and this offer of the Congress came to be known as the 'Poona Offer'.

But Whitehall still remained obdurate and the dream of Mr C. Rajagopalachari who was responsible for the Poona Offer was dashed to the ground by the first blast of British reaction to his offer. The Viceroy, speaking for the British Government, made a counter-offer on August 8, 1940. His Excellency was authorized by His Majesty's Government to invite 'a certain number of representative Indians to join my Executive Council'. His Excellency also declared that 'a moment when the Commonwealth is engaged in a struggle for existence is not one in which fundamental constitutional issues can be decisively resolved.' A similar declaration followed in the House of Commons a week later when the then Secretary of State for India, Mr Leopold Amery, reiterated the difficulty of the subject in the following words: 'To keep one's balance steadily along a knife-edge of ice in the high Alps is much easier task than treading one's way without stumbling or offence through the intricate pitfall-strewn maze of the present Indian situation.'

CHAPTER IV

THE STRUGGLE

The Poona Offer went to the greatest extent to which the Congress could possibly go to co-operate with the Government. The national demand was pitched at the lowest, and Mr C. Rajagopalachari who was the brain behind the new offer, was the target of much criticism within the Congress itself. The Socialists and the Communists were particularly hostile. The master mind of Rajaji knew no peace since the resignation of the Congress Ministries and day in and day out he had been agitating on platforms and in the Press and also pressing his colleagues in the High Command that the Congress must be in power during the war and thus assure herself of a seat at the Peace Conference. This would give her an opportunity to press her just demand before the comity of nations. Rajaji's stand brought tremendous amount of unpopularity for him and it was responsible for effecting a sharp though temporary ideological cleavage between Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress. I remember vividly the atmosphere of feverish excitement in Poona when the Socialists and Communists headed by Mr Yusuf Meherally lead a vitriolic opposition. I doubt very much that if that great champion of socialism, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, had not come to Rajaji's rescue and chaperoned his cause, the resolution embodying the Poona Offer moved by Rajaji, even though seconded by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, would ever have been in the Statute Book of the Congress. For the moment, however, Rajaji won the day, and for the first time Mahatma Gandhi who had

been the architect of India's destiny for twenty years, went one way and the Congress Working Committee another.

The Congress had done all this only in its anxiety to throw in its lot with the Allies and use all India's resources to fight the menace of Fascism and Nazism to which it was deadly opposed, if that helped in any way the preservation of democracy and liberation of its own land. But the British Government like the Bourbons learnt nothing and forgot nothing. Not only was the offer of co-operation rejected by the British Government but the rejection was followed by arrests of hundreds of public workers, including some of the top-men in the Congress, under the all-powerful Defence of India Act. This only resulted in promoting greater opposition to the Government and a wave of indignation spread throughout the country. The Congress felt that there was no common ground between Great Britain which was 'struggling for existence' and India which was denied the same right for existence. The Congress therefore condemned the British attitude and exhorted the countrymen all over India to convene meetings for condemning the British attitude. The people's disappointment was bitter to overflowing; their patience was exhausted. It looked as though the storm brewing ever since the declaration of India's belligerency without the consent of her people would burst out in full fury. Resentment grew and people demanded that the Congress should act. But the course of the war and the desperate predicament in which England herself was placed made the Congress hesitate, as Pandit Nehru said, the Congress could not wholly forget Gandhiji's dictum that their objective should not be to embarrass the opponent in his hour of trial. An apostle of non-violence as he has been all his life, Gandhiji would

not take any advantage of Britain's distress. All that he demanded was the elementary right of freedom of speech for the country to preach its own views on the war. 'There is enough room for compromise in this resolution,' he said referring to the A.I.C.C. resolution. 'I shall go to the Viceroy with the resolution and ask him if the present situation is not such as will lead to the extinction of the Congress. There is no question of mass civil disobedience. I am still thinking of something but I have not yet seen the light.' He was very much worried. Sweeping orders restricting the freedom of the people in every conceivable way distressed his mind. Not a word could be uttered against these restrictions! He had been in deep thought for days to find a way out of this painful position. He thought he should take up the matter with the Viceroy immediately and he did meet Lord Linlithgow on September 27, and told His Excellency that his non-violence could not tolerate the idea of embarrassing Britain in her difficulties. All that he demanded was the elementary right of freedom of speech to give candid expression to their frank and honest views on the war. But the bureaucracy said, 'no'. Gandhiji returned a disappointed man, but of the justice of his demand, he had not even an iota of doubt. 'It is my firm conviction,' he wrote, 'the British statesmen have failed to do the right thing when it was easy to do it. If India is wholly in favour of participation in the war, they could have easily disregarded any hostile propaganda. But the determination to gag free expression of opinion, provided it was not in the least tainted with violence, shatters Britain's claim that India's participation is voluntary. Had the Congress proposal been accepted, such aid as Britain would have got from India would have been an asset of inestimable value. The non-violent party would have

played an effective part for honourable peace when the proper time for it was in sight, as it must be some day.'

Spurred on by the persistent refusal of the British to meet India's legitimate demands, Gandhiji felt he could no longer keep quiet but must act according to the pressing inner urge. He must do something as a symbolic protest against all these restrictions. He chalked out a plan of individual Satyagraha which was later approved by the Congress Working Committee on October 11. According to this new plan Satyagraha was limited to individuals. Only workers of proved worth and representatives of the people in the Legislatures could offer civil disobedience in the form of protest against India's participation in the war. They could do so only with the previous approval of Gandhiji and after giving notice to the Government. This was a novel plan of Satyagraha which even India under the leadership of the Mahatma had not yet seen. This movement was restricted to individuals so that the British Government might not be embarrassed in their hour of trial. It was a symbolic protest against British obstinacy in not granting even the elementary right to speak which is the very breath of existence.

On October 17, 1940, the Satyagraha was started by Vinoba Bhave who was arrested four days after and was imprisoned. Ten days later Pandit Nehru who was to be the next Satyagrahi was arrested at the Cheoki Railway Station even before he could offer formal disobedience. The Satyagraha and arrests of Satyagrahis went on, and it continued for fourteen months.

Meanwhile a number of distinguished non-Congress leaders sensing the feeling of frustration and sullenness among the people came forward to find a way out of the prolonged impasse. Most of these leaders had no party affiliation; they met in a conference in Bombay in

March under the presidency of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. The Non-Party Leaders' Conference adopted a lengthy resolution emphasizing the necessity of ending the deadlock by immediate reconstruction of the Governor-General's Executive Council which, the Conference said, should consist of non-official Indians drawn from important elements in the public life of the country. The leaders asked that a definite time-limit should be fixed within which India was to attain the same measure of freedom as was enjoyed by the Dominions. This, the Conference urged, was necessary to create a favourable atmosphere for the working of the reconstructed Central Government and for removing the doubts and misgivings of the people of this country as regards the sincerity of the intentions of His Majesty's Government. This new Council would be responsible, while the war was still in progress, to the Crown, and not to the Legislature, but it should in substance be treated in regard to all inter-imperial and international matters, on the same footing as a Dominion Government.

Despite the fact that this demand was made by such distinguished front-rank leaders like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Rt. Hon'ble Dr M. R. Jayakar, Sir N. N. Sircar, Sir Cowasji Jehangir, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, Mr V. D. Savarkar, Dr S. P. Mookerjee, it shared no better fate in the hands of that recalcitrant Secretary of State than the many offers made by the Congress from time to time. Mr Amery also stressed the impossibility of undertaking any major constitutional change with regard to the Viceroy's Executive Council during the stress and strain of war. 'The Scheme proposed by the resolution would amount not to a modification of the present form of Government, but to its supersession by an entirely different type of Government,' he averred. 'That is, certainly,

something going beyond what we think practicable in the midst of ever-increasing strain and urgency of the war situation. It would also create internal constitutional problems of no little difficulty both in relation to the Provinces whether those now enjoying self-government or those administered under Section 93 and to the Princes; and in that and other ways, it would raise still unresolved issues of constitutional future.' He once again took shelter under the communal differences in India and said that the resolution was 'directed to the wrong address'.

Mr Amery's emphasis on the communal differences in India and his remark that the Bombay Conference resolution was addressed to the wrong quarter brought a sharp rejoinder from the Standing Committee of the Conference and from its President, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, whom the Secretary of State called 'that distinguished and veteran statesman'. 'Bluntly put,' said Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, 'Mr Amery is mortgaging our future to certain intractable leaders.' The Standing Committee said: 'Practically the present position of the Secretary of State is that until it pleases Mr Jinnah to approve of any scheme, His Majesty's Government can do nothing to give effect even to their own intentions as announced in August last.'

It may be recalled that the declaration of the Viceroy in August 1940 laid down no condition that a change in the Indian Constitution could be brought about only in the event of an agreement between the major contending parties.

Thus another attempt, this time by a set of distinguished leaders who had no party affiliations, met with utter failure. It was evident that His Majesty's Ministers were not prepared to part with power. They spoke the language of democracy, but they continued to think and act in terms of imperialist autocracy.

CHAPTER V

THE CHANGE

The symbolic Satyagraha which was started on October 17, 1940, continued for a year and though a plethora of statements were issued from and speeches made by authoritative quarters—all urging an immediate political settlement—the situation did not show the slightest improvement. They only helped to estrange the Indo-British relations still further. Almost all the front rank nationalist leaders were in the 'wilderness'. Even the moderate demands of the non-party leaders had been turned down unceremoniously and with the failure of their move, the last vestige of hope of a settlement disappeared. For a time frustration deepened and darkened the political life of the country.

The situation, however, took a new turn when, towards the close of the year the Government suddenly decided to release all individual Satyagraha prisoners whose offence was formal and symbolic. The decision was reached on December 3, 1941, presumably due to the threat of war in the Far East, for four days later Japan swooped on Pearl Harbour, even as their ambassador Kurusu, was still conducting negotiations with the United States of America. The Japanese Army and Navy were at their highest pitch of efficiency at that moment. Misfortune also awaited the Allies. Two of their outstanding warships, 'Prince of Wales' and 'Repulse' were sunk on December 10 and Hongkong surrendered a fortnight later.

When all the members of the Congress Working

Committee came out of jail a meeting was called at Bardoli in the last week of December, 1941. It was a momentous session, for 14 months had elapsed since their last meeting. Much had happened in the interval. The Congress had gone to the length of launching Satyagraha, though in a restricted measure, to assert the right of freedom of expression. The Government remained adamant and did nothing. What was the Congress going to do now? In view of the changed situation, would there be any change in their attitude towards the war ? Was there anything in the situation to warrant a change at all? Would the Government on their part take a step forward in view of the quickly changing military situation in the Far East? Or would there be only a continuance of the 'do-nothing' policy or only an expansion of the Viceroy's Council and the constituting of a body here and a committee there just as a sop to world public opinion and to make a show of British sincerity to India even in the midst of extremely difficult times ?

At Bardoli a change occurred in the active leadership of the Congress. Mr Rajagopalachari was once again urging that the Congress should abandon its policy of adhering strictly to non-violence during the war and make another gesture that it would be ready to co-operate in the war efforts if Government were prepared to climb down from the Olympian height of obstinacy and make honourable co-operation possible.

The Bardoli meeting however did not specifically lay down the conditions under which the Congress co-operation in Government war efforts would be available. The reason for this was understandable. Times without number the Congress had laid down conditions, demanded a clarification of His Majesty's Government's war aims, constitution of a real National Government in India and

so on. But all their demands had been summarily rejected and they would not once again court insult and humiliation by specifying conditions. All that the Congress made clear in Bardoli was the change in their attitude towards non-violence. Hitherto their co-operation, if available, meant passive non-violent co-operation but now the Congress was ready to associate itself actively in the defence of the country, even abandoning for the moment its strict adherence to non-violence. The price it had to pay for the change in its policy in relation to war efforts was heavy. It was the sacrifice of the principle of non-violence and the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi who had been guiding all nationalist movements for more than a quarter of a century. To Gandhiji the creed of non-violence was the very breath of his life ; he had been practising this creed for more than fifty years. He could not remain at the helm of the Congress when it eschewed a principle so dear to his heart. He, therefore, retired from the active leadership of the Congress but with his usual broadmindedness agreed to make his experienced advice available to the Congress whenever it was required. He even went to the length of commending the Bardoli resolution to the Congressmen at the A.I.C.C. which was convened at Wardha to confirm the departure in Congress policy.

The significance of the Bardoli resolution, as I have stated above, was that it offered co-operation in the defence of the country without any mental reservation on the issue of non-violence. 'If the British Government would entrust to us the responsibility of the defence of our country and concede to us the necessary powers,' said Mr Rajagopalachari explaining the significance and gist of the Bardoli resolution, 'we would not shirk the responsibility and we must organize defence.'

The war in the East was moving fast and the world received the greatest shock of the war on the night of February 15, 1942, when the B.B.C. announced the fall of Singapore. The surrender of what was claimed to be one of the most impregnable naval bases of the world had a tremendous effect on India, because with its loss Allied supremacy over the Eastern waters passed on to the enemy who was now threatening India directly. The loss of Singapore underlined the urgent necessity of obtaining the co-operation of people in India and Burma. But more surprises were in store. Within three weeks of the fall of Singapore the British evacuated Rangoon and by the end of May the whole of Burma went to the Japanese. One of the most unwise chapters in the Allied military strategy in the Eastern struggle was its failure to occupy the buffer State of French Indo-China. Its occupation by the Japanese at the opportune moment gave them a timely advantage in shortening their communications and helped them a great deal in their march towards Singapore from the rear.

The victory of the Japanese army in the East was as sudden as it was swift. The occupation of the Strait Settlements, Malaya States and Burma by the enemy created a general panic in this country and it was universally believed that the Eastern gates of India were now exposed to direct attack and that it was only a matter of days or hours before the enemy launched an aggressive attack on India. What now ? What about India still unreconciled? There were uproars and angry protests in the British Parliament and in America against British Policy in India which now remained the only base for operation against the Eastern Enemy. The Labour and Liberal Statesmen in Britain severely censured the Government for its policy in India and urged His Majesty's

Government to take immediate steps for a re-orientation of their policy and to conciliate India. 'We succeeded in Ireland, but too late,' said Sir Percy Harris, Liberal Member of Parliament, criticizing His Majesty's Government's Indian Policy. 'Do not let it be said that we succeeded in India too late. We solved the problem in Canada by the discovery of Lord Durham. Why should we not find another Lord Durham and send him to India with full powers to try with goodwill to solve the urgent and vital problem of India?'

At last the widespread agitation in England had its effect and the obstinate Churchill Government had to bow down to the will of the Nation. On March 11, 1942, Mr Churchill announced in the British Parliament his Government's decision to send Sir Stafford Cripps, Lord Privy Seal, to India with proposals from the War Cabinet in a new attempt to win over the people of India.

CHAPTER VI

'THE POST-DATED CHEQUE'

The Cripps Proposals opened a new and important chapter in the political history of India. No English political leader was ever held in greater esteem in India as a champion of India's cause than Sir Stafford Cripps and no Englishman had ever done greater harm to India than he. Ever since Sir Stafford started his political career in England he had been a consistent and valiant fighter for India's freedom and he espoused India's cause most vigorously in Parliament, in party meetings, on the platform and in the Press. His sympathy for the Indian National Congress was unquestioned and among the Congress leaders he had many friends. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru happened to be his very close and personal friend and yet it was Pandit Nehru himself who described Cripps as one who had done the greatest harm to this country. This was due to his 'volte face' on the Indian issue after the failure of his ill-fated mission to India. The way in which he chose to be the apologist for Imperialism not only spoiled his fair name and his good reputation in India but it virtually killed his own political career. How far he himself was responsible for the failure of his mission the future alone can tell. But his wholesale advocacy of the British cause with greater enthusiasm than even the most ardent Tory, the way in which he threw the entire blame for the failure of his negotiations on Mahatma Gandhi and his ill-advised broadcast to America in defence of the British stand—all these have left a bitter taste in the mouth. It is sad beyond measure, said

Pandit Nehru, that a man like Sir Stafford Cripps should allow himself to become a Devil's advocate. 'He has injured Indo-British relations more than any other Englishman could have done,' added Pandit Nehru.

Sir Stafford Cripps has been an outstanding figure in British politics. He had the courage of his conviction, and his frank exposition of views led to his expulsion from the British Socialist Party of which he was a distinguished member. Because of his uncompromising attitude he won the title of the 'Enfant Terrible'. After his ostracism from his party his political fame was under eclipse for a time, but those who knew his ability and legal acumen could foresee that this brilliant advocate would soon return to first class politics and once again make his mark among the front-rank British statesmen.

When the war broke out and the attitude of Soviet Russia towards the Anglo-German war was uncertain and to some extent suspicious, it was to Sir Stafford Cripps that the British Cabinet turned. It was felt that the Soviet Power should in any circumstance be roped in to the side of the Allies and the best man for the task was Sir Stafford. It was only this one man in Britain who, for his socialist views, his ideological affinity with Soviet Russia was held in some esteem in the land of Stalin. In the past no love had been lost between Britain and Russia and the many irresponsible statements made from time to time during the pre-war days by Mr Winston Churchill about Stalin and his country only strained Anglo-Soviet relations to a breaking point. The job of appeasing Russia therefore bristled with difficulties and extraordinary diplomatic skill was required to achieve concord with Russia. Sir Stafford was called for and sent to Moscow; the world now knows how successful his mission to Moscow proved to be. In appreciation of his success in Moscow Britain

gave him a seat in the War Cabinet and the leadership of the House of Commons and also made him the Lord Privy Seal. His popularity was at its zenith and if the die-hard Churchill had made room for him in his War Cabinet, it was not because he really liked him but he had to yield reluctantly to popular pressure. Cripps was even considered to be the potential successor to Premier Churchill.

Sir Stafford Cripps arrived in New Delhi on March 23, 1942, and immediately proceeded to meet the leaders of public life of the country. Long before his arrival the Viceroy, presumably at the instance of the War Cabinet, issued invitations to the prominent leaders whom the Lord Privy Seal would like to meet. They were asked to keep in readiness to leave for Delhi to meet him at a moment's notice. In view of the worsening war situation in the East and heavy preoccupation of Sir Stafford in England, no time could be lost in starting the negotiations. Hence all preliminary arrangements were made complete even before the arrival of Sir Stafford Cripps. On March 29, Sir Stafford announced the eagerly awaited War Cabinet Proposals at a Press Conference. In view of the unusual importance of, and the conflicting interpretations given to these proposals it is expedient to quote below the text of the document which later on came to be known as the Cripps Proposals :

'His Majesty's Government, having considered the anxieties expressed in this country and in India as to the fulfilment of the promises made in regard to the future of India, have decided to lay down in precise and clear terms the steps which they propose shall be taken for the earliest possible realization of self-government in India. The object is the creation of a new Indian Union which shall constitute a Dominion by a common allegiance to

the Crown but equal to them in every respect, in no way subordinate in any aspect of its domestic or external affairs.

'His Majesty's Government, therefore, make the following declaration :—

(*a*) Immediately upon the cessation of hostilities, steps shall be taken to set up in India, in a manner described hereafter, an elected body charged with the task of framing a new Constitution for India.

(*b*) Provision shall be made, as set out below, for participation of the Indian States in the constitution-making body.

(*c*) His Majesty's Government undertake to accept and implement forthwith the constitution so framed subject only to:

> (i) The right of any province of British India that is not prepared to accept the new Constitution to retain its present constitutional position, provision being made for its subsequent accession if it so decides.

'With such non-acceding provinces, should they so desire, His Majesty's Government will be prepared to agree upon a constitution giving them the same full status as the Indian Union, and arrived at by a procedure analogous to that here laid down:

> (ii) The signing of a Treaty which shall be negotiated between His Majesty's Government and the constitution-making body. This treaty will cover all necessary matters arising out of the complete transfer of responsibility from British to Indian hands; it will make provision, in accordance with the undertakings given by His Majesty's Government, for the protection of racial and religious minorities; but will not impose any restriction on the

power of the Indian Union to decide in the future its relationship to other Member States of the British Commonwealth. Whether or not an Indian State elects to adhere to the Constitution, it will be necessary to negotiate a revision of its Treaty arrangements, so far as this may be required in the new situation.

(*d*) The constitution-making body shall be composed as follows, unless the leaders of Indian opinion in the principal communities agree upon some other form before the end of hostilities:

'Immediately upon the result being known of the provincial elections which will be necessary at the end of hostilities, the entire membership of the Lower Houses of the Provincial Legislatures shall, as a single electoral college, proceed to the election of the constitution-making body by the system of proportional representation. This new body shall be in number about one-tenth of the number of the electoral college.

'Indian States shall be invited to appoint representatives in the same proportion to their population as in the case of the representatives of British India as a whole, and with the same powers as the British Indian members.

(*e*) During the critical period which now faces India and until the new Constitution can be framed His Majesty's Government must inevitably bear the responsibility for and retain control and direction of the defence of India as part of their world war effort, but the task of organizing to the full the military, moral and material resources of India must be the responsibility of the Government of India with the co-operation of the people of India. His Majesty's Government desire and invite the immediate and effective participation of the leaders of the principal sections of the Indian people in the coun-

sels of their country, of the Commonwealth and of the United Nations. Thus they will be enabled to give their active and constructive help in the discharge of a task which is vital and essential for the future freedom of India.'

The reactions to the proposals were widely divergent. The proposals seemed to be a clever attempt to placate each and every political group to a certain extent and no group in a full measure. The Ramgarh Congress demanded 'nothing short of complete independence' for India and the British Draft Declaration had as its object the 'creation of a new Indian Union which shall constitute a Dominion associated with the United Kingdom and other Dominions by a common allegiance to the Crown but equal to them in every respect, in no way subordinate in any aspect of its domestic and external affairs.' The Congress had declared that the future Indian Constitution could be shaped and its relations to the other countries of the world determined by the people of India alone through a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of adult suffrage. This demand was partially met by the Draft Declaration which provided for the setting up of a Constitution-making body composed of about one-tenth of the members of the Lower Houses of Provincial Legislature which was to function as an electoral college for electing members of the Constitution-making body by the system of proportional representation.

The Muslim League was crying itself hoarse for Pakistan and the Draft did not disappoint the League either. Though His Majesty's Government had undertaken to accept and implement forthwith the Constitution framed by the Constitution-making body, the Draft Declaration conceded the 'right of any province of British India that is not prepared to accept the new Constitution to

retain its present Constitutional position.' His Majesty's Government had further agreed upon a new Constitution 'giving them the same full status as the Indian Union'.

Even those who clamoured for minority rights could find some satisfaction in the clause which provided for a Treaty to be signed by His Majesty's Government and the Constitution-making body, 'in accordance with undertakings given by His Majesty's Government for the protection of racial and religious minorities'.

The Indian Princes had been a pawn in the British game and they were anxious to preserve and safe-guard their autocratic rule in any future Indian Constitution. This claim of the Princes was also conceded. They had been given representation in the Constitution-making body to be fixed on the basis of population; but, as the Congress resolution on the Cripps Proposals pointed out 'ninety millions of the people of the Indian States were completely ignored and would have no voice in choosing those representatives, nor were they to be consulted at any stage, while decisions vitally affecting them were being taken.'

The Hindu Mahasabha which had pursued a policy of take-what-you-get-and-ask-for-more was satisfied with the responsibility given to the Indians in respect of the 'task of organizing to the full the military, moral and material resources of India'.

At the same time dissatisfaction was expressed by all the parties to some feature of the Draft or other. For instance, the Congress would not accept the view that the vital subject of Defence, or at least some important part of it, which covered every sphere of life and administration, especially during a war, should not be transferred to the Indians. Though the Muslim League did not vehemently oppose the Draft in which their demand

of Pakistan had been partially granted, their quarrel was that the right of self-determination had not been laid down therein more emphatically.

The Hindu Mahasabha uncompromisingly opposed that part of the Draft which conceded the right of self-determination as such a contingency would, in its opinion, usher in Pakistan and consequent disruption of the country which they were determined to avoid.

It was hardly surprising, therefore, that the British Draft Declaration was rejected by all parties for some reason or other. And yet the Oxford Don, Professor Coupland, who came to India for a study of her Constitutional position and mysteriously got mixed up with the official groups of the British emissary, characterized this as the 'Declaration of Indian Independence'. It must, of course, be said in fairness to the authors of the British Draft Declaration that it was the most radical of all declarations so far made by His Majesty's Government on India's future Constitutional position. In the main, the post-war scheme as embodied in the Draft Declaration conceded the general Indian demand voiced by progressive opinion and the Congress itself had admitted this fact in its resolution of April 2, 1942. The new Draft sought to repeal the preamble to the Act of 1919 as reproduced in the present Constitution Act, which is humiliating to India's self-respect. In the place of that preamble was substituted the now-famous Balfour declaration about Dominion Status upon which the Statute of Westminster is based. The Cripps Draft in a certain way even exceeded the bounds set by the Statute. The right of secession from Britain or from the British Commonwealth might be implicit in that historic document. In the Draft Declaration, however, an open authoritative statement was made, for the first time in the history of

Indo-British relations, that no restriction was to be imposed on the power of the Indian Union to decide its relationship to the other member-states of the British Commonwealth.

But what was wrong in such a document were the provisions and restrictions about the immediate future and these made real freedom almost an illusion. In the draft an attempt was made to make the future pleasant. Emphasis had been laid on the future, on what India would be after the cessation of hostilities. The British declaration talked of a treaty between India and Britain which would 'cover all necessary matters arising out of the complete transfer of responsibility from British to Indian hands.' 'The future is pleasant and there does not appear to be any blurring of outlines', said Dr Ram Manohar Lohia, an eminent Congressman who was in charge of the foreign section of the A.I.C.C. Dr Lohia, however, pointed out that as regards the immediate present the proposals were woefully inadequate. In view of the progressive deterioration in the far-eastern war situation —the enemy was knocking at the very gates of India— the present was more important and the whole future of the country depended upon what happened in that brief period of a month or two. 'In today's grave crisis', the Congress resolution on the Cripps Offer said, 'it is the present that counts, and even proposals for the future are important in so far as they affect the present.' But here the terms of the Draft were very vague and inadequate. The Draft made it clear beyond doubt that 'during the critical period which faced India and until the new Constitution could be framed His Majesty's Government must inevitably bear the responsibility for and retain the control and direction of the Defence of India as part of their world war effort.' Though the ultimate goal of

India was complete independence the immediate issue was the defence of the land from the aggressor. The Japanese armies had thrust themselves into the territories of Burma, Malaya and Singapore and their rapid advance on the one hand and the Allied withdrawal on the other created an atmosphere of lethargy and almost of scepticism. To rouse the popular mind, a psychological revolution was necessary. The spirit to fight aggression could be cultivated only when the people could be made to feel that they were free and fighting for the defence of their own free land under the leadership of their own free people. This sincere patriotic spirit, which Mahatma Gandhi called moral support, would be manifest only when the people were actuated by a zeal to fight for the protection of their motherland, for the protection of their own women and children. An assurance about the future of that land, however tempting or definite, could not achieve the psychological energy or enthusiasm. It was because of the urgency of the problems created by the threat of the invasion of India that the Congress was laying special stress on the question of transfer of real power to Indian hands immediately. 'What is most wanted,' said the Congress resolution, 'is the enthusiastic response of the people which cannot be evoked without the fullest trust in them and the devolution of responsibility on them in the matter of defence.' The Congress President, Maulana Azad, went to the length of expressing readiness to ignore the future if real transfer of power was made immediately. In his letter to Sir Stafford Cripps on April 10 the Congress President said: 'The future, important as it is, will depend on what happens in the next few months and years. We were therefore prepared to do without any assurance for this uncertain future, hoping

that through our sacrifices in the defence of our country we would lay the solid and enduring foundations for a free and independent India.'

On this question of transfer of real power in respect of Defence immediately the Congress sought clarification. Negotiations went on for more than a week and Sir Stafford gave the following defence formula defining the subjects to be in charge of the Commander-in-Chief and those to be left over in charge of the Indian Defence Minister :

(*a*) The Commander-in-Chief should retain a seat in the Viceroy's Executive Council as "War Member" and should retain his full control over all the war activities of the armed forces in India subject to the control of His Majesty's Government and the War Cabinet upon which body a representative Indian should sit with equal powers in all matters relating to the Defence of India. Membership of the Pacific Council would likewise be offered to a representative Indian.

'(*b*) An Indian representative member would be added to the Viceroy's Executive, who would take over those sections of the Department of Defence which can organizationally be separated immediately from the Commander-in-Chief's War Department and which are specified under head (i) of the annexture. In addition, this member would take over the Defence Co-ordination Department which is at present directly under the Viceroy, and certain other functions of the Government of India which are directly related to the Defence and which do not fall under any of other existing departments and which are specified under head (ii) of the annexture.

His Majesty's Government very much hope, as I personally hope, that this arrangement will enable the Congress to come into the scheme so that if other import-

ant bodies of Indian opinion are also willing, it will be possible for His Excellency the Viceroy to embark forthwith upon the task of forming the new National Government in consultation with the leaders of the Indian opinion.'

ANNEXTURE

I. Matters now dealt with in the Defence Department which would be transferred to a Defence Coordination Department.

(*a*) Public relations.

(*b*) Demobilization and post-war reconstruction.

(*c*) Petroleum Officer, whose functions are to calculate the requirements of, and make provision for, all petroleum products required for the Army, Navy, and Air Force, and for the Civil Departments including storage and distribution.

(*d*) Indian representation on the Western Group Supply Council.

(*e*) Amenities for, and welfare of troops and their dependents, including Indian soldiers abroad.

(*f*) All canteen organizations.

(*g*) Certain non-technical educational institutions, e.g., Lawrence Schools, K. G. R. I. M. Schools and the Prince of Wales' Royal Indian Military College.

(*h*) Stationery, Printing and forms for the Army.

(*i*) Reception, accommodation and social arrangements for all foreign missions, representatives and officers.

II. In addition, the Defence Co-ordination Department would take over many major questions bearing directly on defence, but difficult to locate in any particular existing departments. Examples are:

'Denial' policy.

Policy of evacuation from threatened areas.

Signals Co-ordination.

Economic warfare.

The War Department, for which the Commander-in-Chief will be Member, will be responsible for the Governmental relations of G. H. Q., N. H. Q., and A. H. Q., which include :—

(1) Examining and sanctioning all proposals emanating from G. H. Q., A. H. Q.

(2) Representing the policy of Government on all questions connected with the war which originate in or concern G. H. Q., N. H. Q., or A. H. Q.

(3) Acting as the channel or communication between the Government of India and H. M. G. on all such questions.

(4) Acting as liaison between these headquarters and the other Departments of Government, and Provincial Governments.

This formula of Defence with its annexture did not meet the requirements of the Congress. The Congress agreed that though Defence was of essential importance and without it a National Government could not function properly and efficiently, it had no intention of encroaching upon the functions of the Commander-in-Chief who would control the armed forces and would have full latitude in the carrying out of the operations connected with the war. It was only with a view to

arriving at a settlement, as pointed out by the Congress President in his letter to Sir Stafford Cripps, that the Congress was prepared to accept certain limitations on the normal powers of the Indian Defence Minister. 'We had no desire,' said the Congress President, 'to upset in the middle of the war the present military organization or arrangements. We accepted also that the higher strategy of the war should be controlled by the War Cabinet in London which would have an Indian Member. The immediate object before us was to make the defence of India more effective, to strengthen it, to broadbase it on the popular will, and to reduce all red tape, delay and inefficiency from it. There was no question of our interfering with the technical and operational sides.' The Congress could not agree to this list as the subjects mentioned therein to be left in charge of the Indian Defence Minister were relatively unimportant. Sir Stafford suggested thereafter a new Defence Formula without any list of subjects and when clarification to some of the vague phrases in it was sought by the Congress and a list of subjects that would be left in charge of the Defence Coordination Department demanded, Sir Stafford backed out from his original position and no list was sent.

From here began the pulling of the wires from behind the scene by the reactionary elements both in Delhi and Whitehall. Sir Stafford referred the Congress to the old list which was already rejected by it.

On the point of National Government, the position was still worse. Though in the earlier stage of the negotiations, the Lord Privy Seal gave the Congress to understand that he envisaged a National Government which would deal with all matters except Defence, he retreated from this position later. In spite of differences, the Congress did agree to put aside for the time being all

questions provided a truly National Government was formed at the Centre—a National Government which must be a Cabinet Government with full powers with the Viceroy acting as a Constitutional Head, but they were not prepared to countenance the continuation of the Viceroy's Executive Council, an arrangement which left all the power to the Viceroy. But in the new Government offered by Sir Stafford Cripps it was clear that the Viceroy would retain all his powers. The Congress, as a matter of fact, did not ask for any legal changes but only for definite assurances and conventions which would indicate that the new Government would function as a free Government, the members of which would act as members of a Cabinet in a constitutional Government. As pointed out by Maulana Azad in his letter of April 11, 1942, Sir Stafford himself 'in the very first talk' said that there would be a National Government which would function as a Cabinet and that the position of the Viceroy would be analogous to that of the King in England vis-a-vis his Cabinet. But not only had the British Emissary retraced his step later on but he characterized such a government as 'constituting an absolute dictatorship of the majority', a nominated Cabinet which would be responsible to nobody but itself and which could not be removed by anybody. The British Government, he said, could not do so, as 'it would not be consistent with the pledges already given by His Majesty's Government to protect the rights of the minorities!' 'Until such time,' Sir Stafford said, 'as the Indian people frame their new Constitution, His Majesty's Government must continue to carry out its duties to those large sections of the Indian people to whom it has given its pledges.'

What a passionate regard for pledges! What about the many other pledges His Majesty's Government had

given to the Indian people from time to time and have they cared to redeem them?

Thus the long chapter of Cripps negotiations came to an abrupt end. What are the real causes for this failure of the negotiations whose success appeared at one stage to be so bright? We shall discuss them in the following chapter.

CHAPTER VII

THE REASON WHY

The failure of the Cripps Mission was a major disaster both for India and Great Britain. As a matter of fact, the failure had its reaction on the entire Allied military strategy in the East. The success of the Mission would certainly have been an asset to the United Nations; and the failure proved to be a great liability to them. Its success would have rallied India as a powerful ally in the war against the Japanese, which would thus have been fought to a quick victory and the reconquest of not only Burma but also of far-off territories like the Federated Malaya States and Singapore would have been hastened. But a discontented and turbulent India was the fruit of Cripps failure and even Burma remained untouched till the end of 1944.

What was the real reason behind the failure of this great diplomatic mission? Was it that the Indians with their deep-rooted attachments to the creed of non-violence refused to participate actively in the violent war which would have been the result of the Cripps Proposals had it been accepted by the Congress? Or was it that Britain even at the most critical juncture in her history was not sincere in spite of her loud protestations of transferring real power to the Indians?

Various reasons have been given for the failure of the Cripps Mission and the consensus of opinion is that though a little more accommodating spirit and a sense of toleration on both sides would have spelled success, the balance of blame was on the British side. The plea that

Gandhiji's non-violence and his influence over the Congress stood in the way of success of the Mission is utterly baseless. It was stated that Sir Stafford Cripps changed his mind suddenly in the midst of his talks as he felt that with the influence of Gandhiji's non-violence Indian nationalism, after it had wrested power from Britain, might make peace with the Japanese. This mischievous insinuation about the Congress brought forth angry rejoinders from the highest Congress spokesmen, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi himself. Mahatma Gandhi said: 'The deliberations of the Working Committee at New Delhi were carried on without any influence or guidance on my part. Therefore the negotiations had nothing to do at any stage with the question of non-violence.'

Pandit Nehru made a similar statement. I remember it distinctly. This was how it came about. Immediately after the return of Sir Stafford Cripps to England he gave for the first time an exclusive interview to the Editor of the United Press of India in London on the failure of his mission in India, in the course of which he put the entire blame of the failure of his ill-fated mission on Gandhiji. When the London cable reached the Bombay office of the United Press, I ran to Pandit Nehru who happened to be in the city then in connexion with the session of the National Planning Committee. I showed the cable to Pandit Nehru and he got so excited at the deliberate vilification by his one time friend Sir Stafford that for some time he could not speak. In a rage he walked up and down the Sakina House for about five or ten minutes and then sat down with a disturbed mind and dictated to me 'inter alia' the following rejoinder:

'I do not wish to continue the argument as to what took place during our conversation with Sir Stafford

Cripps. This has been sufficiently debated in public and every aspect put before it. The Cripps proposals have gone into the limbo of things, done with and forgotten. They have no reality now.

'Only one thing I should like to say that Sir Stafford's statement to the effect that the Working Committee had apparently accepted the proposals and it was only after further consultations with Mahatma Gandhi that they were turned down, is entirely incorrect. It is true that newspapers were making guesses and sometimes stating that the Working Committee was likely to accept the proposals, but Sir Stafford ought to know that these newspaper stories had no basis. After Gandhiji left Delhi there was no consultation with him of any kind and it is entirely wrong to imagine that the rejection was due to his pressure.

'Sir Stafford appears to hint that our rejection was due largely to Gandhiji's adherence to non-violence. This is also wholly incorrect. No question of violence and non-violence arose in our talks or in our consideration of this subject. We rejected the proposals purely on political grounds and we rejected them unanimously because they did not transfer real power to the Indian people. It was only a travesty of power that was offered and India which has stood these long years for complete independence could not accept these humiliating proposals. Let me say again that the question has to be considered on political grounds and on no other.'

As I came down the Sakina House after my interview with him Pandit Nehru rushed after me and dictated the following line at the gate to be added to the interview.

'It is on the basis of independence and independence alone that we can consider the question of India.

The impression I gained from my interview with

Pandit Nehru was that he was greatly pained that a personal friend of his, Sir Stafford Cripps, should vilify the greatest man of the land. Jawahar's statement and more than that the surprised and angered look in his face convinced me that Cripps' statement was not in accord with facts.

The refusal to transfer real power to Indian hands in the immediate present was primarily responsible for the failure of the Cripps Mission. Sir Stafford himself lent colour to this plea, for he said in his interview to the 'United Press of India':

'We are not going to walk out of India right in the middle of war, though we do not wish to remain there for any Imperialist reasons.' The only consideration that had weighed with the British Government against the transfer of real power during the war was the defence of the land. War must in any circumstances be fought to a successful conclusion and certainly Britain could not hand over completely everything connected with Defence when a war was being fought on far-flung battle-fields, if such a transfer affected their military strategy. This, however, was not the issue on which the negotiations broke down. The Congress did realize the implications of the transfer of power in regard to defence to a militarily inexperienced India. But why not a National Government ? Sir Stafford turned down the Congress demand for the real transfer of power to the people of India on the plea that it would constitute a tyranny of the majority! He would keep the British Viceroy all-powerful and the British Commander-in-Chief omnipotent with everything connected with the conduct of war. A National Government for India would only be a myth when there was the all-powerful Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief practically ruling India. To keep the Viceroy the supreme authority

was not transferring power. All that the Congress demanded was an assurance that for all practical purposes unconnected with the war the voice of the National Government should prevail and the Viceroy should not interfere with their day-to-day affairs. At the beginning of the negotiations Sir Stafford himself told his visitors that the Viceroy would be like the King of England, a Constitutional Head. But subsequently he said that he used terms like 'National Government' and 'Cabinet' not in their accepted sense, but only for illustrating his ideas. But he never revealed what these ideas were.

What were the reasons behind the sudden volte face of Sir Stafford? During the first few days in India he talked matters and brought them almost to the point of victory but why did he change suddenly in the midst of the talk? The real reason for the failure of the negotiations is not to be found in the fantastic theories that sought to prove that the interference of Gandhiji and his creed of non-violence blocked the way or that the Congress wanted to have all or nothing in regard to Defence. The cause of failure lay elsewhere. We have it on the authority of the Congress President that Sir Stafford had agreed to reduce the Viceroy to the position of the British King. This appeared to have frightened the Viceregal Lodge and a frantic exchange of cables between New Delhi and Whitehall changed the whole atmosphere. The story goes in India that Lord Linlithgow was alarmed at the way in which the Lord Privy Seal was hobnobbing with leaders of the Congress. Lord Linlithgow, it is reported, even threatened to resign if there was going up any reduction in his powers and if His Majesty's Government agreed to such a proposal. He also managed to win the otherwise conciliatory Commander-in-Chief over to his side and thus the attitude of intransigence which the

Linlithgow-Wavell combination adopted had its immediate effect on His Majesty's Government and quickly did it pull Sir Stafford up when the latter was already on the high road to success.

That explains why Sir Stafford behaved strangely during the latter part of his negotiations with the Indian leaders, eating the humble pie, discounting all that he had said earlier and saved his face by taking recourse to all sorts of diplomatic quibblings like a dying man clutching at a straw. As Dr Rammanohar Lohia puts it: 'He got out of a difficulty by telling the untruth that the Congress was asking power for the Hindus.' Pandit Nehru also confirms this story. He thinks that Delhi and Whitehall diehards were frightened at the exceedingly alluring promises which Sir Stafford was making to Indian nationalism and, being his superiors, they pulled Sir Stafford up. Dr Lohia does not accept Pandit Nehru's theory in its entirety. He thinks that Pandit Jawaharlal's interpretation reduces Sir Stafford to being a robot. If Sir Stafford had no hand in it, he thinks, he should not have, as an honest man, tolerated this strange attitude of his superiors. Even if he could not speak out his heart and thus divulge the real mystery of the failure of his mission, he could have at least resigned his Cabinet post. But not only did he not take that honourable course but went to the length of attempting to lead the British offensive against Indian Nationalism.

A third theory about the Cripps' failure in India is prevalent in some quarters. Dr Rammanohar Lohia in his *Mystery of Sir Stafford Cripps* discusses this theory cogently. He believes that the failure was influenced by the last minute intervention of Col. Louis Johnson, President Roosevelt's personal Representative in India. 'Open American intervention in imperial affairs,' says

Dr Lohia, 'would touch an Englishman on the raw same as an old man would feel when power started slipping from his hands into those of a viriler set. Aside from being nationally susceptible, Sir Stafford was personally sensitive. After Johnson's intervention the mission had lost half its charms for Cripps. Even if he had succeeded he could not have gathered all the plums.'

Dr Lohia's explanation, as he himself admitted in his book, could not be an entire explanation for the failure of the Cripps mission. It may be as best an influential factor contributing towards the failure but the real blow came from different sources as stated above.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PRELUDE

Sir Stafford Cripps left the shores of India on April 12, 1942. Soon after the failure of his ill-conceived mission and his departure a terrible frustration seized the country. With the abrupt withdrawal of the Cripps proposals the last vestige of hope that Britain would part with power disappeared from the mind of Indians. What should be the next concerted step that India should take to vindicate her position and to wrest power from unwilling hands? Gandhiji raised the cry 'Quit India'. He appealed to every Briton to quit India so that India might be free and help the Allies especially China, which was in need of help, in the war efforts much better. But this cry was used by Imperialists in Britain and abroad to paint Gandhiji before the world as a pro-Japanese defeatist. Mahatma Gandhi made it clear that 'Quit India' did not mean physical withdrawal of the British from India with their bags and baggages. In the interest of Allied war efforts and in order to defeat the aggressors the military and their accessories might be kept undisturbed. Only, Britain should 'Quit' all her powers and the British should live not as rulers but as allies of a Free India. 'It has been pointed out,' wrote Gandhiji in the *Harijan* on July 5, 1942, 'that not to consent to the Allied troops remaining in India during the period of war is to hand over India and China to Japan, and to ensure the defeat of the Allied Powers. This could never have been contemplated by me. The only answer, therefore, to give was to suffer the presence of

the troops but in circumstances the reverse of the existing. They will remain under the permission of Free India and not in the role of masters but our friends.'

But the British Government would not do anything of the kind. They were going to hold their own as long as they could, especially when after more than two continuously disastrous years, the course of the war was changing in their favour. The various statements and speeches made by their spokesmen during the debates on India in Parliament left no doubt about their attitude. The British die-hard Prime Minister, Mr Winston Churchill set the seal on official policies when he made that historic statement—one of the most provocative ever made by any British statesman about India—in Parliament. He said: ' We mean to hold our own. I have not become His Majesty's First Minister to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire.

Mr Churchill was brutally frank and his unambiguous statement, most bitter though it was, was marked by remarkable outspokenness. What did this statement mean? Did it leave any room for doubt about the real motive of the British Government in India? Did it not mean that with the passage of time and with victory within the grasp of the Allied Nations, the glow of high ideals and the quest of the Holy Grail had already begun to dim, and that at the peace table India and the other subject countries would be left high and dry in the same condition in which they were?

What then could India do now? More than two and a half years had elapsed since the outbreak of the war. India's suffering was terrible and her slavery brought in its wake untold misery and starvation for the poor millions of her people. India could no longer remain a silent spectator of this terrible drama. She had waited long in

patience and waited in vain. Indians must do something now to achieve their objective or die in the attempt. The Congress Working Committee met at Wardha in July and reiterated its demand for complete independence. This demand was an old cry. It was made times without number since the Lahore Congress in 1929 but it had gone unheeded for thirteen years. It had even now no immediate prospect of being listened to by the authorities concerned unless they were compelled by circumstances to do so. As a matter of fact, experience in the past had shown that no demand for complete independence would cause any headache to British Imperialists unless it had some sanction behind it. The Working Committee therefore authorized Mahatma Gandhi to take such steps as he deemed necessary, including the launching of a mass Civil Disobedience Movement to press that demand. Gandhiji however made it clear that he would like to exhaust every ounce of his energy in exploring all possible avenues of an honourable settlement. And that nothing would be done in a huff or in secret. In a speech in that august Assembly at the Gowalia Tank Maidan on that fateful night of August 8, 1942, he unfolded his mind frankly to his audience. That speech will go down in history as one of the most brilliant and heart-searching utterances that the Mahatma had ever made in his memorable political career of more than half a century.

He said: 'The actual struggle does not commence this moment. You have only placed all your powers in my hands. I will now wait upon the Viceroy and plead with him for the acceptance of the Congress demand. That process is likely to take two or three weeks.'

He went on: 'Nothing, however, should be done secretly. This is an open rebellion. In this struggle secrecy

is a sin. A free man would not engage in a secret movement. It is likely that when you gain freedom you will have a C. I. D. of your own, in spite of my advice to the contrary. But in the present struggle we have to work openly and to receive bullets in our chests, without taking to heels. In a struggle of this character all secrecy is sin and must be punctiliously avoided.'

The Mahatma referred to the campaign of abuse and vilification by the Muslims against him and the Congress. 'Islam enjoins you not to revile even an enemy. The Prophet treated even enemies with kindness and tried to win them over by his fairness and generosity. Are you followers of that Islam or of any other? If you are followers of the true Islam, does it behove you to distrust the words of one who makes a public declaration of his faith? You may take it from me that one day you will regret the fact that you distrusted a friend of yours. It cuts me to the quick to see that the more I appeal, the more the Moulana importunes, the more intense does the campaign of vilification grow. To me the abuses are like bullets. They can kill me even as a bullet can put an end to my life. You may kill me. That will not hurt me. But what of those who indulge in abusing? They bring discredit to Islam. For the fair name of Islam, I appeal to you to resist this increasing campaign of abuse and vilification.'

The Mahatma recalled the glorious days of the past when he worked in close and intimate unison with the Ali Brothers and referred in feeling terms to the present distrust of Mr Jinnah in him. He said:

'If to-day the Congress has incurred his (Qaid-e-Azam's) wrath, it is because the canker of suspicion has entered his heart. May God bless him with long life, but when I am gone, he will realise and admit that I had no

designs on the Mussalmans and that I had never betrayed their interests. Where is the escape for me if I injure their interests. My life is entirely at their disposal. They are free to put an end to it whenever they wish to do so. Assaults have been made on my life in the past, but God has spared me till now and the assailants have repented for their action. But if some one were to shoot me in the belief that he was getting rid of a rascal, he would kill not the real Gandhi, but the one that appeared to him a rascal.'

Gandhiji made a passionate appeal to all—Congressmen, the Princes, the students, journalists, Government servants and soldiers—to contribute their mite to the struggle for freedom in their own way. He said:

'Here is a Mantra—a short one—that I give you. You may imprint it on your hearts and let every breath of yours give expression to it. The Mantra is: "We shall do or die. We shall either free India or die in the attempt. We shall not live to see the perpetration of our slavery." Every true Congressman or woman will join the struggle with an inflexible determination not to remain alive to see the country in bondage and slavery. Let that be your pledge.'

The Mahatma continued: 'I want Englishmen, Europeans and all the United Nations to examine in their heart of hearts what crime India has committed in demanding independence today. I ask: Is it right for you to distrust us? Is it right to distrust such an organisation with all its background, tradition and record of over half a century and misrepresent its endeavour before all the world by every means at your command? Is it right, I ask, that by hook or by crook, aided by the foreign Press, aided, I hope not, by the President of the U. S. A., or even by the Generalissimo of China, who

has yet to win his laurels, you should present India's struggle in shocking lights?'

In an earlier press interview also in Bombay Gandhiji made it clear that no struggle would be started unless he had exhausted all his persuasion with the Crown Representative in India. 'I have definitely contemplated an interval,' said the Mahatma, 'between the passing of the Congress resolution and the starting of the struggle. I do not know that what I contemplate doing according to my own light can in any way be described as in the nature of a negotiation. But a letter will certainly go to the Viceroy, not as an ultimatum but as an earnest pleading for avoiding conflict. If there is a favourable response, then my letter can be the basis for negotiation.'

Indeed the reply came. The reply to all his pleading in the A. I. C. C. and in the press interview came from the Government not as a basis for negotiations. It came as a shocking blow to India. In the early hours of August 9, only four or five hours after the conclusion of the A. I. C. C. session Gandhiji was arrested at the Birla House and with him the members of the Working Committee and also most of the members of the A. I. C. C. This was the prelude to the long and continued disturbances in the city of Bombay and in the whole of the country, later called the August Disturbances. I must record here an interesting incident which gives an idea of the atmosphere in the city of Bombay on the fateful night of August 8, 1942.

I came home about one in the morning after a very hectic day, covering the A. I. C. C. proceedings and went to bed about two o'clock. Hardly had I slept two hours when suddenly my telephone bell rang up. I hastened to the 'phone and heard a voice from the other end telling me: 'Keep alert, a big offensive against the Congress

leaders is in the offing.' I rubbed my tired and sleepy eyes to make sure if I was not dreaming. For only dream it could be. I had been at the A. I. C. C. throughout and till the last minute had talked matters to so many people, fellow journalists, members of the Working Committee and the A. I. C. C. Nobody hinted at the possibility of any offensive being launched by the Government at this stage and none was apprehended, especially when the Mahatma had clearly stated his intention not to launch any struggle until and unless his negotiations with the authorities fell through completely. How then could there be any offensive from the Government who wanted to avoid any struggle, I argued and my mind refused to believe the mysterious warning on the telephone. But the next moment I got over my drowsiness and the tip given to me, no matter how wrong it might ultimately prove to be or from whatever sources it might have emanated, roused the journalist in me and I began telephoning to my office and to all other sources, newspaper offices, Birla House, and the residence of the Working Committee members. But inscrutable are the ways of the authorities. All telephones were cut off. This worried me much. It was only a few minutes ago that I was talking on the 'phone and got a warning. How could all the telephones of Bombay suddenly go out of order! I tried and tried but with no better fate. In that confusion I forgot to get in touch with the headquarters of the Provincial Congress Committee. I tried their number and surprisingly got a response. A voice told me that all was not well on the Congress front and abruptly banged the receiver. I was non-plussed. A mysterious telephone ring without divulging the source, disappointment on the telephone everywhere and sudden response from the B. P. C. C.! These strange and conflicting factors were

troubling me at the moment. If there was going to be an offensive at all against the Congress, the B. P. C. C. stood the risk of being the first office to be seized by the police. How could I then get a reply from the B. P. C. C. at 4-30 A.M. ? Any way, I could not keep quiet and complacent when two mysterious sources confirmed the same story. Hurriedly I put my coat on and came out in the street in a moment and saw a little later a tremendous onrush of people in the street and boisterous demonstrations everywhere. I came to the B. P. C. C. premises to know only that it was under police custody since 3 o'clock. And yet I got a reply at 4-30 a.m.! All telephone wires were disconnected and yet I got a warning!

This reminded me of Webb Miller's experience in Bombay during that classic non-violent Dharashana Satyagraha. Mr Miller, special correspondent of the American United Press was deputed to cover the Satyagraha Movement. Once he drafted a 2,000-word message and took it to the telegraph office. The Government of India had consistently maintained that it imposed no censorship upon outgoing messages. Of course, there was a drastic censorship on the newspapers in India. Within a few hours after Webb Miller's message was filed he received a mysterious rumpled scrap of paper upon which were pencilled the words: 'Mr Miller: The messages you deposited about Dharashana have not been telegraphed.' There was no signature; when Miller inquired from the porter who brought the note he said it was an Indian youth whom he did not know. 'I concluded,' Miller recorded in his book *I Found No Peace*, 'that the note had been sent by some Gandhi sympathiser in the telegraph office, which was manned chiefly by natives.'

Many things have happened since then and I have covered many a strange and historic event but the voice

of my informant who gave me that alarm in the stillness of that historic night of August 8 remains to me a mystery to this day.

CHAPTER IX

THE STORM

In the early hours of August 9, 1942, the Government swooped down upon the unsuspecting Congress leaders. In the words of Gandhiji, the arrests were an example of Government's leonine violence'. But more was to come. Popular discontent which was latent all these days expressed itself in manifestation of hostility to the British Government and its agents in India. Much as India had suffered at the hands of her Imperial masters, the country was not in a mood to take this insult lying down. The nation's leaders were being spirited away at the bidding of an alien bureaucracy.

Protests took the form of non-violent demonstrations. Hartal was observed. Merchants closed their shops; students came out of their classes and workers walked out of their factories in spontaneous, symbolic protest against this affront to India's national dignity.

The Government of India was taking no chances. On August 8, 1942—even before the Government could have had time to know the official decision of the Congress—the tickers in newspaper offices were creeding ominous details of the measures which the Government proposed to take to suppress the national movement. The excuse of war emergency was liberally availed of to promulgate any number of repressive ordinances and regulations which did not leave even a shadow of civil liberty for the citizen. Immediately after the arrest of Congress leaders simultaneous action was taken in the provinces to declare the Congress Committees unlawful associations and

detain all important individuals without a pretence of a trial.

The scene of the momentous August session, Bombay, gave the lead to the nation in the matter of demonstrations. The people spontaneously rose in revolt against official repression. Shops were closed as soon as the news of arrest of leaders was known. A flag salutation meeting at Shivaji Park, was to have been addressed by Gandhiji on the evening of August 9. Smt. Kasturba offered to take his place at the meeting, but she was arrested before she could start for the place. The police used tear-gas to disperse the crowd.

The police and the military came down upon the city in the days following August 9, 1942. What happened in Bombay was repeated in other parts of the country. In Ahmedabad, the capital of Gujerat,—Gandhiji's home province—workers came out of the mills and the strike continued for six months. A battalion of British infantry, 700 strong, was quartered in the Congress House. There were disturbances and police firing. Newspapers were subjected to special hardships.

It was not in the tradition of Poona, storm-centre of Maharashtra, to take things lying down. The three days—August 9 to August 12—were days of terrible happenings. Clashes with the military and police were reported.

The people's revolt soon spread to other provinces: Madras, the Central Provinces and Bengal. The provinces which seriously challenged British rule were the United Provinces and Bihar where even the people in remote villages acted upon the 'Quit India' slogan and were true to the 'mantra' of 'do-or-die' which was Gandhiji's message to the nation.

The Government of India became panicky and

resorted to measures which only a country at war uses against an 'enemy'. The following details, revealed in the course of a debate in the Central Assembly on September 24, give an idea of the frame of mind the officials were in:

Mr K. C. Neogy moved a resolution recommending to the Governor-General in Council the appointment of a committee to enquire into the allegations of police and military excesses in the country. He gave instances of general pillage and wanton damage to property by the police and the military, shooting at random, and assault and shooting of non-violent crowds.

Mr Neogy read out a complaint from a district leader of the National War Front in Muzaffarpur, which speaks for itself:

'Troops and police were let loose on the countryside and in the course of my tours in the villages as the leader of the National War Front for my native district, I had reports made to me of the oppression of the police and of the troops, of vandalism, of wanton destruction, and loot of private property, of villages burnt, of extortion of money on threat of arrest and in some cases of actual physical torture. . . . What these eyes of mine have seen in the villages: all wealthy shops in the bazar looted; entire village burnt not by the mob but by soldiers and by the police; and I must confess that these sights would haunt me to my dying day.'

Mr Neogy then quoted from a notice which a Zamindar in Ghazipur had served on the U. P. Government. The Zamindar said:

'On the 26th August, 1942 my manager sent a message and I came to know that four European soldiers accompanied by about 150 military men armed with lathis and along with the Sub-Inspector of Nadaganj

Police Station, came to my village in the afternoon of 24th August and asked all the male members of my village including my manager and servants to leave the village and file on a 'kutcha' road, which passed through the village on pain of being shot at. The male members including children came out of the village and sat on the 'kutcha' road. Thereafter, the four European soldiers along with the military men entered the village leaving a few military men to guard the villagers still on the road. In the village, the women were asked to come out of their houses on threat of being shot at, should they refuse to do so. When the women came out, the soldiers deprived them of their ornaments,. . . .and after that they raided the houses and looted cash, jewellery, ornaments, clock, etc.

'Then the soldiers removed the clothings from the houses of the villagers outside the houses and set them on fire and further set fire to 20 houses of my tenants in addition to several straw-thatched houses in the village.

'After having looted my house and the house of my tenants, the soldiers came back on the road and asked all children below the age of 12 to go out of the line of the people sitting on the road. After this order was complied with, the adult persons sitting on the road were asked to sit like frogs, after undressing themselves, including my manager. They had to obey the order at the point of the rifle.

'Thereafter, a bamboo stick was split up into a few parts and five stripes were severely inflicted on the naked back of each of the villagers.

'One of my peons who was protesting, was tied to a tree and mercilessly beaten with 30 stripes and was later on taken under arrest with three other villagers.

'No public property is situated near my village and

none was injured by the residents of my village.'

Mr Neogy also quoted from a letter of the Merchants' Chamber, U. P., which complained of indiscriminate arrests and beatings by the police in Cawnpore. It was alleged that the police broke open the doors of houses, and in the absence of the men-folk, terrorized the women, smashing and throwing all belongings and removing the valuables of the houses.

Narrating some incidents which happened in Calcutta, Mr Neogy spoke about the shooting of a boy of seven. The boy was standing on the edge of his house in a lane. A Sergeant entered the lane and shot him. 'That lane was not the scene of any hooliganism or disturbance, and yet the Sergeant rushed into the lane and shot dead that little boy and got away after committing this act of great bravery!'

Mr N. M. Joshi, who followed Mr Neogy, gave instances of police high-handedness in Bombay. A boy who was not in the midst of a crowd, and whose only fault was that he said 'Gandhi Maharajki-jai' was shot at in cold blood.

He also narrated the incident which happened in Kaira district. 'Some students were going about villages preaching Satyagraha. After finishing preaching Satyagraha, they were going to take a train at some railway station in Kaira district. The police party which was hunting these boys, alighted from the train which they were going to catch and marched towards them...... In spite of their willingness to be arrested peacefully, the police fired on these students. Three of them were killed and a large number of them wounded. Not only that, after firing on these boys the police prevented help being given to the wounded by way of water. The wounded felt thirsty. The villagers and the railway staff were

prevented from doing so.'

Mr Joshi spoke about the bayonetting of a peaceful crowd in Bhanwori. When the people started retaliating, the police fired, killing three or four. The manager of the Gandhi Ashram was thrice shot at and killed.

What happened at Nandurbar in Dhulia District is shocking even in this tale of cruelty. Nandurbar is a small town and on August 9, the students who were apparently children took out a procession when they heard about the arrest of leaders. When the procession was marching, the police Sub-Inspector was hit by a missile by a person who, the people in Nandurbar knew, was an enemy of this police official. The police Sub-Inspector got angry and instead of catching hold of his assailant, he fired on the school children; three or four of them were killed.

Sardar Sant Singh told the story of a retired Sub-Inspector of Ghazipur, U.P., whose property was not spared, even though he was a loyal subject. The ex-Sub-Inspector in a memorial complained: 'In spite of the fact that Your Excellency's memorialist and his whole family are faithful and loyal subjects of the Government, his country house ... along with others was burnt to ashes and all his other movable property was looted away and destroyed by the military under the direct command of the district authorities.'

Sir Reginald Maxwell (Home Member at that time) admitted in the assembly that as a result of police firing '340 were killed and about 850 wounded .... but the information from parts at Bihar is not quite yet complete .... The military too were forced to open fire on many occasions and the reported figure of casualties thus caused are 318 killed and 153 wounded. Military casualties are 11 killed and 7 wounded.'

A few days later, the Deputy Commander-in-Chief admitted that mobs had been machine-gunned from the air!

Chimur will remain long in men's memory as an example of autocratic repression which went beyond the limit of human endurance. Chimur is a village in the Central Provinces and its proximity to Sevagram had a significance to the people and to authorities as well, as was shown later. In the hectic days following August 9, a crowd besieged the Police Station and in the *melee* that followed, four officers lost their lives. This was the signal for authority to act. Troops were despatched to the village and all male members of the community who were of any note or could wield the least influence were arrested. For a time, no outsider was allowed inside the village. It is not necessary to speculate on what happened there. A report of prominent women alleged that 'cases of rape had occurred along with other forms of frightfulness, such as looting and demolition of property on a large scale'. The C.P. Government in a series of 'communiques' tried to whitewash the happenings. But there was one soul to take up the cause of these mothers of India whose cry of agonies was not allowed to reach a wider audience. Prof. Bhansali, a simple ascetic, and an inmate of Gandhiji's Ashram, who had dedicated his life to silent service, heard that cry. He went to Delhi, to plead with Mr Aney, then a member of the Viceroy's expanded Executive Council, whom he happened to know. Failing to achieve what he wanted, namely, an impartial enquiry into the happenings at Chimur, he started a fast in Mr Aney's house. This was too much for the Honourable Executive Councillor who called in the police to arrest Prof. Bhansali. He went on a hunger-strike, was released and left at Sevagram. But he decided to

go on a fast unto death to vindicate the honour of Indian womanhood. His 62-day fast created a sensation. The Government of India used all their resources to suppress the news of Prof. Bhansali's fast and a blanket ban was placed on the publication of the news. The press was equal to the challenge and with the notable exception of the Anglo-Indian papers observed an all-India hartal. On the 63rd day of the fast, Government admitted defeat and a compromise was arrived at. The Professor's life was saved, and national self-respect vindicated.

By the end of 1942, sixty thousand two hundred and twenty-nine persons were arrested. 18,000 were detained under D. I. R.; 940 were killed by police firing and 1,610 were injured by police or military firing.

The Home Member admitted that the military had to be called out in about 60 places, that the police had to resort to firing on about 538 occasions and that planes were used in five places to disperse crowds.

And what was the people's answer to this official oppression? In Nagpur, for 72 hours the British Government did not function. In Balia, in the U.P., to quote the words of Pandit Nehru after his release 'the British rule ceased to exist. The whole structure of British Government collapsed from top to bottom, though not for long. The armies came and the planes came. They razed the villages to the ground. They ploughed the land where the villages once stood in order to put an end to the very fact that such brave villages once existed. A vast number of cases were started before the special tribunals. So far as I know, out of the innumerable cases in Balia District not a single charge of personal violence has been made. I would like to know of any other country where foreign rule collapsed in an entire district without a single incident of personal violence.'

But every place was not Balia. There were outbreaks of violence prompted not only by unbridled official oppression but by patriotic zeal which took forms not in consonance with the official policy of the Congress which is sworn to the doctrine of non-violence for attaining the country's independence. Sir Reginald Maxwell, speaking in the Central Assembly on September 15, gave the official version of these incidents. According to him, in a period of only one month about 250 railway stations were damaged or destroyed, of which 180 were in Balia and the eastern part of the United Provinces. Outside these areas, 24 derailments were reported. Damage was done to a few railway engines. There was extensive damage to the permanent way and rolling stock. About 550 post offices throughout India were attacked, of which over 50 were completely burnt down and over 200 seriously damaged. Over 3,500 instances of wire-cutting were reported. About a lakh's worth of cash and stamps were lost and a number of letter boxes were removed or destroyed by acids or other burning material. The violence of the people was mainly directed against Government buildings. Seventy Police Stations and outposts and eighty-five other Government buildings were attacked, the majority of which were burnt. The total damage might well have been a crore of rupees.

The sporadic and violent activities were taken advantage of by Power-that-be and made the occasion for a vile propaganda against the Congress outside India, especially in the United States of America where pro-Indian feeling had been growing for some time. Mr Churchill in his very first statement in Parliament on India made a comprehensive reference to the disturbances and showed his mailed-fist when he said that 'the number of white soldiers now in that country (India)

are larger than at any time in the British connection'. He had also no hesitation in trying to minimize the importance of the Congress and to show to the British public that the Congress had not much influence, neither did it command any influence over the majority of the people of India. 'The Indian Congress Party,' he said, 'does not represent all India. It does not represent the majority of the people of India. It does not even represent the Hindu masses. It is a political organisation built around a party machine and sustained by certain manufacturing and financial interests.'

This mischievous statement caused much bitterness in India. Even the Anglo-Indian paper of Lahore, the *Civil and Military Gazette*, which had never any reputation for pro-Indian leanings and which was the extremist pro-British organ in this country, had to come out in fairness with a biting editorial contradicting the British Premier's statement. 'It is merely fatuous casuistry,' the paper said, 'to seek to lower the prestige of the Congress to heal the tragic breach.' Mr Churchill's statement was characterized by every fair-minded man in India, Indian or British or others, as biased, disingenuous and provocative enough to exacerbate public feeling in the country, and could only result, as it did, in increasing the sense of frustration and bitterness.

The 'disturbances' continued till the fateful announcement about Gandhiji's fast. And then they stopped suddenly. There was a significance in this. For, before announcing the news that Gandhiji was going to fast, the Government released the correspondence that had passed between him and the Government. In one of the letters Gandhiji made it plain that violent demonstrations could have no place in any movement which had the official sanction of the Congress. If only the Government

had released the letter as soon as they had received it, it might have saved a lot of bloodshed! If only the Government had allowed Gandhiji time to negotiate with the Viceroy history might have been written differently!

CHAPTER X

THE ORDEAL

The disturbances continued unabated till the end of 1942. Even in the year 1943 there was hardly any sign of the popular revolt dying down. But the widespread repressive measures adopted by the Government had some effect. Meanwhile the Bureaucracy, adopting doubtful methods in their crude propaganda, tried to attribute the responsibility of this violence to the Congress. The Bureaucracy tried to show to the world that in the midst of a total war the Congress which had always declared itself wedded to the creed of non-violence, had engineered and encouraged violent demonstrations which considerably damaged the war efforts of the country. In some quarters a hint was also given that Mahatma Gandhi, if he was really the apostle of non-violence, should have come out with a statement unhesitatingly condemning the violence and that if he was inclined to do so, the authorities would certainly provide him the necessary facilities. Whatever his political differences with the Government of the land, it was said, Gandhiji, who had spent half a century in practising the creed of non-violence and preaching it to the world could not have kept silent when violent demonstrations were taking place in every nook and corner of the country.

When people were idly speculating as to what would be the attitude of Gandhiji to the developments in the country, came the sudden announcement from the Government that Mahatma Gandhi had proposed to undertake

a fast of three weeks' duration from the 10th February, 1943. With this was also released the correspondence which had taken place between Mahatma Gandhi on the one hand and the Viceroy and the Government of India on the other. It was then that the world first came to know that the Mahatma was very much perturbed at the disturbances in the country and took up the matter with the Viceroy as early as August 14, 1942, that is, six days after his arrest at Bombay. 'Violence was never contemplated at any stage,' wrote Gandhiji in his letter to Lord Linlithgow. He added : 'A definition of what could be included in non-violent action has been interpreted in a sinister and subtle manner as if the Congress were preparing for violent action.'

'In spite of all that has been said to the contrary,' he said in his second letter to the Home Secretary on September 23, 'I claim that Congress policy still remains unequivocally non-violent. The wholesale arrest of the Congress leaders seems to have made the people wild with rage to the point of losing self-control. I feel that the Government, not the Congress, are responsible for the destruction that has taken place.'

So the ordeal began at 9 a.m. on the appointed day at the Aga Khan Palace at Poona. This decision of the Mahatma, taken in the evening of his life to 'crucify the flesh by fasting' according to the law of Satyagraha cast a deep gloom over the country and caused deep concern to the people not only in India but also abroad. In India, a feeling of horror and suppressed dismay overtook all. Whatever might be their differences with the political programme and views of the Mahatma, people had universal respect for him and his sincerity, and devoutly wished that he might be spared long to lead not only the country but the world in its path of progress. The

Mahatma had undergone this ordeal, the last resort of a Satyagrahi for the vindication of truth and justice, many a time in his life, but today he was a different man; he was 74, emaciated in his physique. But Gandhiji was firm and in the circumstances obtaining in the country he thought that that was the only way of securing justice. That was 'an appeal to the Highest Tribunal for Justice', which he had failed to secure from the authorities. 'If I do not survive the ordeal,' he said concluding his letter to the Viceroy two days before he began the fast, 'I shall go to the Judgment Seat with the fullest faith in my innocence. Posterity will judge between you as representative of an all-powerful Government and me as a humble man who has tried to serve his country and humanity through it.'

During the crucial twenty-one days of the epic fast the attention of the whole world was naturally riveted on the Aga Khan Palace. Millions of souls all over the world had been passing through days of anxiety—and in many cases of agony—to know the day-to-day condition of Mahatma Gandhi and how he was standing the ordeal. Fast was not a new thing to Gandhiji. As a matter of fact, the present fast was the 17th that he had undertaken and the fifth major one. But none of them had caused greater anxiety and alarm to the public as well as to the doctors than the present fast. Dr Bidhan Chandra Roy who had become the Mahatma's 'official' physician after the death of Dr Ansari and who was attending on him during the present fast, thought 'he was very near death'. On the eleventh day of the fast, the doctors' bulletin announced : 'Mr Gandhi's condition has changed considerably for the worse. His condition is very grave.' The next day the bulletin warned : 'If the fast is not ended without delay, it may be too late

to save his life.' The same day, February 21, saw a crisis when Mahatma Gandhi was 'seized with nausea and almost fainted and his pulse became imperceptible.'

Thousands of people were deeply stirred by the grave report. India was plunged in grief and anxiety; the questions uppermost in everyone's mind were: Can Gandhiji at the advanced age of 74 stand a fast for 21 days? Will Government have the wisdom to save his precious life by releasing him in time? Hundreds and thousands of men in India and from far abroad sent frantic appeals to the Government of India and to the British Government to make a gesture and save the life of the great man and sacrifice their sense of false prestige and obstinacy. But would they do it? Would they seize the opportunity created by this fast and make another attempt to solve the political impasse which had seized the political field of the country and was now almost deeply rooted in its soil?

Inside the Aga Khan Palace the greatest man of the land was passing anxious moments sacrificing his life bit by bit in vindication of truth and justice.

Thousands of people from all over the country gathered at Poona and remained there in the waiting list for permission to see the Mahatma in penance. With the advance of the fast there was also an influx of journalists, both from all parts of India and from far distant lands like America and China. My professional duties took me also to Poona to 'cover' the historic occasion. Two British journalists later joined us and we all gathered in the small town and paid morning and evening visits to the Palace gate where half a dozen sphinx-like sentries were stationed to ward off undesirables like us! Our only hope, we thought, was Dr Bidhan Roy who had been at Gandhiji's bedside at his own request. Our sources of

information were in fact many but we were not free to make much use of them. We were not free to deal with the occasion in the way any journalist, true to his salt, would like to. Besides, we all felt that it was not an occasion to indulge in our usual wide speculation. Neither was it safe, nor were we allowed to do so. Our 'copy' on a life-and-death question to the whole nation, which was anxiously scanned and scrutinized by millions of newspaper readers, must not be lightheartedly prepared. We therefore agreed to subordinate our professional enthusiasm to the seriousness of the situation and its repercussions on the country as a whole. We agreed to give only an objective and authentic account of the whole situation without any gloss or comment. Bidhan Roy was therefore the target of the journalists' onslaught. We used to run every morning and evening to his residence and whatever little we could gather after hard knocking and whatever we could smell or see around would form the basis of our 'copy'.

I remember the 12th day of the fast when Gandhiji's condition grew worse and was declared by the official bulletin as 'very grave'. The doctors had given up all hopes. I had been waiting endlessly at Dr Bidhan Chandra Roy's residence but when he turned from the Palace he drove past in his car to avoid giving me any indication of the gravity of the situation. But I could see the worry and anxiety writ large on the face of one who is known to be the most stoical among Indian doctors. I had occasions to come in close touch with this greatest of India's doctors, and I had never seen him lose nerve at the sight of his patients. 'I shan't tell you anything to-day,' was the disappointing remark he made about the Mahatma's health. This type of negative remark was nothing new to me, a journalist, and in my

pretty long career as a journalist I have grown accustomed to this negation. No amount of disappointment or rebuff would upset me. But with Bidhan it was a different matter. That was perhaps the only day during the Mahatma's fast when the beaming smile on his broad face disappeared.

I and my colleagues came out disappointed and we held a hurried consultation amongst ourselves. It was agreed amongst us that we must keep a whole night vigil over the Aga Khan Palace. Competition among newspapermen is almost proverbial and a journalist would do everything else in the world but not share his 'scoop' with professional colleagues. But this was not the day for competition or indulging in petty-fogging jealousies. The catastrophe might come any moment and we who were the only people giving the outside world some idea of the occasion must not be parochial in our outlook. Depressed and broken down, all of us returned to our respective destinations.

I had not a wink of sleep throughout the night. Would the night prove the most tragic one of this generation? The light, the only light that God had kindled unto this dark world—was it shedding its last beam this hour? Hopes and fears throbbed in our hearts and the intensity of it all grew and grew as we helplessly paced our rooms and there in the Aga Khan Palace Gandhiji lay imprisoned, without food and sustenance. We could not indulge in even a hard-earned luxury of a nap when the life of the greatest man of the land—greatest for ages past and for ages to come—had been slowly and silently ebbing its way towards eternity.

I became desperate and at 2 o'clock in the morning I made a dash towards the Aga Khan Palace. Little did I realize in the excitement of the moment that restric-

tions were imposed on every passer-by in the road leading to the Palace and every one was interrogated by the police, especially at that dreadful hour of the night. Hardly had I passed the *Parna Kutir* when a police posse cried halt and my car came to a standstill. The thought that some 'disgruntled element' in the Congress might be trying to proceed to the Aga Khan's Palace unnoticed under the cover of darkness to raise prejudicial slogans, thereby create fresh troubles for them, was haunting the police. An armed European police officer rushed towards my car and after a heated altercation let me off when he was convinced that, after all, I had no intention of doing anything naughty! Later I came to know that a little earlier another contingent of journalists made a similar attempt and were detained there for a considerable period and if I was luckier than my colleagues in getting off quickly, it was because by that time experience had taught the officer that these journalists were after all a harmless species! I got back disappointed but I wanted to make sure that all was well in the Aga Khan Palace.

At 3 a.m. I telephoned to Dr Bidhan Chandra Roy and found that the doctor himself feared that the tragedy might occur in the course of the night and therefore he had shifted his bedding from the room in the interior of the bungalow to the side of the telephone in the drawing room, so that if any call should come from the Palace, no time need be lost at that crucial hour of Gandhiji's life. As I telephoned, I could hear Dr Roy's sonorous voice on the other side at once; he thought it must be a tragic call from the Palace; who else dared to disturb him at such an odd hour? Though he was a little embarrassed when he found that it was I who called, he was glad that it was not from the Aga Khan Palace. He assured me that I could retire for the night and he hoped God might yet

lift his eye in compassion and the night might pass off peacefully. What a hectic night that February 21 was —a memorable night which will leave its imprint in a man's life, an imprint which he shall never forget.

With the advance of the fast and the progressive deterioration in the condition of Mahatma Gandhi, the belief grew widely that the Government might not like to take on itself the odium of Gandhiji's continued incarceration in that condition and that Gandhiji might consequently be released. It was further thought that Government would consider this step to be necessary also from the point of view of political expediency. But those who indulged in this wishful thinking forgot for the moment that the die-hard Churchill was at the helm of the British Government who—be it said to his credit—had never made any secret of his persistent anti-Indian attitude and who consistently opposed any progressive measures in regard to India. As the distressful fast went on, it created considerable alarm and anxiety among all sections of the Indian public. Hundreds and thousands of letters and telegrams began pouring at the Government of India's Headquarters pleading for the immediate release of the Mahatma—appeals which came from the highest as well as the lowest individuals in the country and also from a number of foreign sympathizers, and from hundreds of organizations, political, commercial, educational, and industrial. The only solitary and singular exception was Mr Mahomed Ali Jinnah who refused to raise his voice in support of Gandhiji's release, although a number of followers of the Muslim League itself had joined in this universal demand. He considered the August resolution adopted by the Congress under the inspiration and guidance of Gandhiji to be a 'pistol over the head of the Muslim League' and, like the Govern-

ment, insisted on a categorical withdrawal of the resolution before the issue could deserve his consideration.

So far as the Government was concerned, their point was that Mahatma Gandhi was responsible directly or indirectly for the country-wide violent disturbances, which they said, were a result of the passing of the August resolution under his inspiration and guidance and until and unless he retraced the 'ill-conceived' step, the Government argued, no other consideration could weigh with them, not even the risk of Gandhiji losing his life. They paid no heed to the contention that Mahatma Gandhi, the apostle of non-violence who had spent fifty years of his life in preaching the doctrine of non-violence and truth, could not be accused of personal complicity in the orgies of violence that swept over the land after August 9. He was the one man in India to-day who was respected and admired all over the world for sincerity and honesty of purpose. His name and fame were not confined to the geographical boundaries of this land. He had dedicated his whole life to the service of the suffering humanity through penance and sacrifice. Gandhiji was the greatest friend Britain had in India and he had weathered many a storm in his anxiety for a permanent Anglo-Indian *rapproachement*. Nobody could win the Indians over to the side of the British Government but he. He was the only man in India who could, as if by a magic wand, change the suppressed delight of Indians at all British reverses to a desire for real and sincere co-operation with the British. If anything happened to him it would do irreparable harm to Indo-British relationship.

But the heart of the Olympian gods in Simla and Whitehall did not melt. The debate on India in the House of Commons did not kindle any ray of hope in the dark horizon. Mr Amery and Mr Winston Churchill

declared that nothing had happened in India or to the Mahatma to warrant undue anxiety. This betrayed a discrepancy on a vital issue between the views of Whitehall and those of the authorities on the spot who were supposed to supply information to the India Office. It could only lead to the inference that there was a planned hush-hush policy to keep the British public completely in the dark in respect of everything that happened in India. Their obstinate adherence to the die-hard policy was fraught with the gravest political consequences. At this last minute of the last hour when any permanent and friendly settlement between England and India could be reached, at this parting of the ways, at this supreme crisis, it was for the British Government to decide what use they should make of the opportunity presented to them. How long would they continue to carry on with their discredited policy in the political field and set the opinion of the world against them? The cry of the Leaders' Conference which met in New Delhi during the fast was in vain; the countrywide appeal made to the authorities went the same way; even the resignations of three members of the Viceroy's Executive Council as a protest against the policy of the Government in the matter of the fast could not melt the hard-boiled Whitehall gods. The country remained in a state of breathless suspense about the fate of the Mahatma in the self-inflicted ordeal and millions of people all over the world who protested against the bureaucratic obstinacy remained to pray for the safe voyage of the great soul through the tempestuous storm.

But they did not know their Mahatma. Gandhiji rallied from the crisis with amazing rapidity, and in the evening of March 2, after remaining without food for 21 days, he almost tried to sit up by himself.

I approached Dr Roy after the fast was over to

explain to me how the Mahatma could survive the ordeal at the age of 74 when all the eminent doctors declared to the world that his life could not be saved. Dr Roy said : 'He has fooled us all. But it is nothing surprising. Gandhiji sometimes baffles medical science.' He recalled his experience with Gandhiji in an earlier fast in Delhi when he and Dr Ansari told the Mahatma that he was heading towards a danger unless he put up a requisite weight. Gandhiji declined to take food on any account but wanted seven days' time instead, and strangely enough when he was weighed at the expiry of the seventh day, he was found to have put up that weight. Dr Roy gave me the following analysis of the fast from the medical point of view :

'Our forecasts (that Gandhiji's life cannot be saved) proved erroneous. We could only depend upon the law of averages and could only give an opinion on the basis of what would happen to an average man under similar conditions. But Gandhiji is a miracle ; he sometimes baffles medical science. Full control of the mind over the body and strong determination to live, for which he fought every inch of the ground—this is how he could tide over the crisis that threatened his life at one stage of the fast.'

CHAPTER XI

THE 'DO-NOTHING' POLICY

The excitement which had shaken the country during Gandhiji's fast died down considerably after the Mahatma had successfully emerged out of his self-imposed ordeal. In despondency and utter frustration the people resigned to the inevitable and the last vestige of hope that there might yet be some improvement in the prolonged political stalemate disappeared, especially when it was realized that even the opportunity offered by the fast was not taken advantage of by the Power-that-be. And in the Aga Khan Palace remained that great soul shattered in health and mind to continue to pass the evening of his life. Although due to his strong control of the mind over the body he had been able to steer clear through a great crisis, the fast and the loss of two of his dearest companions—his life consort Kasturba, and his faithful and loyal disciple, Mahadev Desai, who was more than a son to him—left their indelible impress on his body and mind. The tissues of the body at the seventy-fourth year were all rudely shaken, amœbiasis and infectious hookworms, anæmia and malaria, rigid blood vessels and an enlarged heart—all these and many other serious complications became his constant companions causing alarm to the attending physicians and they declared : 'Mahatma needs to be nursed like a child now.'

Thirteen months went after the fast without any appreciable development in the political sphere. Then suddenly, there was a ripple in the political backwater

of India. On May 6, 1944, the Government of India abruptly released Gandhiji unconditionally on medical grounds. The country was not prepared for this sudden but happy news in view of the consistently unbending attitude of the authorities in the past. But sometimes things do happen when one is least prepared for it. Simultaneously with his release hopes once again sprang in every one's heart that this release might at last foreshadow a change of heart in the Bureaucracy. This was, however, a hope against hope, for if the Mahatma was let off, it was not because there had been any change in the authorities but because they themselves were getting alarmed at the growing deterioration of his health and were no longer prepared to take the great risk of keeping him in their custody.

The release, however, did not make Gandhiji happy, for he knew that the country expected much from him and he was incapable of doing anything in the then condition of his health. In his very first letter shortly after his release the Mahatma wrote to the Rt. Hon'ble Dr M. R. Jayakar :

'The country expects much from me. I do not know how you feel about this release. I am not at all happy. I feel even ashamed. I should not have fallen ill. I tried to, but I failed at length. I feel that they will imprison me as soon as I am declared free from the present weakness. And if they do not arrest me, what can I do?'

Whatever might have been the expectations in all political quarters, it was felt that the Mahatma must regain his lost health. He, therefore, stayed in Juhu for a month and then went to Panchgani, a famous hill station in the Western Ghat Ranges about four thousand feet above sea level. In the meanwhile, there were wild speculations about Gandhiji's attitude on the political

situation in the country. Did he still hold fast to every word of that much-maligned August Resolution? Was he still contemplating another mass civil disobedience movement or did the happenings in the country during the twenty-one months of his incarceration make him change his mind?

At last the Mahatma broke the ice and clarified his attitude towards the many burning questions of the day. In his first interview after release at Panchgani to the *News Chronicle* correspondent, he expressed views which showed that his politics had undergone revolutionary changes during his imprisonment. It was he who first rejected the Cripps Proposals and subsequently demanded full independence of India and got that 'Quit India' resolution passed by the All-India Congress Committee. But at Panchgani, the Mahatma showed his preparedness to accept and to advise the Congress to participate in a war-time National Government in full control of the civil administration, leaving the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief in full control of the British and Indian armies. Of course, he expected that the establishment of such a Government would be accompanied by a guarantee of Indian independence after the war. He had also made the startling pronouncement that he had no intention of offering civil disobedience. 'I have no intention of offering civil disobedience today,' he said. 'I cannot take the country back to 1942. History can never be repeated. Even without the authority of the Congress, if I wanted to do it I could start civil disobedience today on the strength of my supposed influence with the masses, but I would be doing so merely to embarrass the British Government. This cannot be my object.' In clearer language he explained the radical change in him. He said: 'There is a difference between what I would

ask today and what was asked in 1942. Today India would be satisfied with a National Government in full control of the civil administration. This was not the position in 1942.'

In other words, he would be happy with a National Government now and a mere but immediate declaration of Indian independence after the war. The National Government of his conception would give the military all railway, port and other communication facilities they required although these would be under the control of the National Government. Ordinance-Rule would give way to normal civil administration by the Government. The Viceroy would be like the King of England, guided by responsible Ministers. The National Government would be in a position to offer advice and criticism on military affairs, and the member holding the portfolio of Defence would be genuinely interested in the defence of the country and would be in a position to give valuable help in shaping policies. The Allies, he thought, could not defeat Japan without carrying on operations on the Indian soil and therefore they would continue to do so, but the expenses of these operations should not be borne by India.

Compare this with his 'Quit India' cry in August, 1942. But, as he himself said, 1944 was not 1942. Even his life-long creed of non-violence would not stand in the way. As a teacher and exponent of non-violence, the Mahatma made it clear in his interview, he would have to stand aside, but he would certainly not offer any resistance to the Government or to the Congress Party participating in such a Government. His co-operation would take the form of abstention from interfering with the even tenor of life in India. He would continue to work in the hope that his influence would always be felt to keep

India peace-minded and to affect world policy in the direction of real peace and brotherhood among all without distinction of race or colour.

Gandhiji felt that if the intentions of the British Government were good, there would be no difficulty about an agreement. The British Government, however, continued to be intransigent and there was no agreement. Ideals had been put aside and the Government was content to drift. Even Gandhiji's request for an interview with the new Viceroy, Lord Wavell, made immediately after his release, was rejected. Gandhiji himself referred to this in his interview with the *News Chronicle* correspondent. 'But I tell you that the common talk among us is that whatever the Viceroy may wish personally, he has no authority in the political sphere,' Gandhiji averred. 'Mr Churchill does not want a settlement. He wants to crush me, if he has been correctly reported. He has never denied the report. The beauty of it for me, the pity of it for him, is that no one can crush a Satyagrahi for he offers his body as a willing sacrifice, thus making the spirit free.'

All his protests went in vain. The British Government did not even concede his simple request to release the members of the Congress Working Committee or, in the alternative, place him in their midst so that he might ascertain their views and find out from them whether they considered that any change in the attitude of the Congress was necessary. Not that British policy had always been static. Even in the present European maelstrom, Greece and Belgium had shown the world that the British Government could change its policy with the swiftness of a chameleon and could take on a reddish, greenish, brownish and blackish tint as opportunity dictated. But it was only in India that they remained

extremely conservative in their policy and method, and like Alice in Wonderland, they had been exploring deeper and deeper into Blunderland.

The political deadlock continued until a year after the release of Mahatma Gandhi, that is, until the middle of June, 1945.

CHAPTER XII

THE TRAGEDY

British and the United States came out victorious after the five and half years' war in Europe early in 1945 and Britain plunged headlong into the general elections at once. As a matter of fact, even before the unconditional surrender of the Nazi Government, the Churchill Cabinet announced that general elections would take place, in the hope that in the flush of victory, the Tories will be returned to power. The Conservatives, however, realized that there was a dark spot in the otherwise rosy picture of the situation. Mr Churchill's India policy had earned for him the odium of even the complacent and generally speaking imperialist-minded British public. The Labour Party, on the other hand, threatened to raise India as an election issue. The Tories realized that something tangible must be done for India.

Here in India, Lord Wavell being the man on the spot was daily experiencing great difficulty in the important work of post-war reconstruction and in the prosecution of the war in the Far East with an unreconciled India as the principal base. He was constantly bringing this aspect of the Indian situation to the attention of self-complacent Whitehall ever since his installation in the Viceregal Gadi. At last his words were listened to and in July 1945 he flew home to review with His Majesty's Government the Indian political situation. Once again great hopes were entertained by Indians that with his transparent sincerity, soldierly straightforwardness, his

deep sympathy with India's aspirations and his firm belief in India's future greatness, His Lordship would be able to bring home to His Majesty's Government the immediate necessity of abandoning the usual swan-song of Mr Amery and Mr Churchill and do something really constructive for India. These hopes were partly realized and when the Viceroy returned to India after over a month's protracted negotiations in Britain, he announced on June 14, his new plan for solving the Indian deadlock. For the first time, the Indian National Congress agreed to lend its support to the Wavell Plan, though it was not free from objectionable features.

The Wavell Plan which was authorized by His Majesty's Government was not, as explained by Lord Wavell himself in his broadcast, an attempt to obtain or impose a constitutional settlement. It only embodied certain proposals for the interim period to ease the political situation and to 'advance India towards her goal of self-government' which would in no way prejudice or prejudge the essential form of future permanent constitutional settlement. The Viceroy invited Indian leaders, both in Central and Provincial politics, to take counsel with him with a view to the formation of a new Executive Council more representative of organized political opinion. The proposed new Council, it was hoped, would represent the principal communities and would include an equal proportion of 'Caste Hindus' and Muslims and would work within the framework of the existing Constitution Act of 1935. The plan further proposed complete Indianization of the Viceroy's Executive Council except for the Viceroy himself and the Commander-in-Chief who would retain his position as the War Member.

A new feature in the Plan was that the important portfolio of External Affairs (other than those tribal and

frontier matters which were to be dealt with as part of the Defence of India), which had hitherto been held by the Viceroy himself, would be placed in charge of an Indian member of the Council ; it was also proposed that a British High Commissioner in India should be appointed, as in the dominions, to represent Great Britain's commercial and other such interests in India. Moreover, the members would now be selected by the Governor-General after consultation with Indian political leaders though their appointment would be subject to the approval of His Majesty the King Emperor. A good point in the Wavell Plan which made it an improvement on the Cripps Proposals of 1942 was a clear assurance that though the Viceroy would retain his veto power, it would not be exercised unreasonably. The Viceroy's veto, in the words of Mr Amery, was a power in reserve, not an instrument in normal use. Readers will remember that the Cripps Scheme foundered on the bed-rock of the Viceroy's veto and in the absence of such an assurance either from the Viceroy, or from the British War Cabinet.

The main tasks for this new Executive Council were to be, firstly, to prosecute the war against Japan with the utmost energy till Japan was completely defeated ; secondly, to carry on the Government of British India with all the manifold tasks of post-war development that faced it until a new permanent constitution was agreed upon and came into force ; thirdly, to consider, when the members of the Government thought it possible, the means by which such agreement could be achieved.

The Wavell Plan was meant only for British India and had nothing to do with the Indian States. It did not envisage any alteration in the relations of the Princes with the Crown representative. The plan also stipulated that if it was accepted and if a new Executive Council

came into being at the Centre, coalition ministries would be formed in the provinces where Section 93 of the Constitution Act had been proclaimed.

Lord Wavell in placing his proposals before the country made an impassioned appeal to the Indian leaders for their sincere co-operation and goodwill. 'There is on all sides something to forgive and forget,' His Excellency said in his appeal.

The Wavell Scheme, as was already stated, was not free from blemishes; neither did it grant all that the Indians desired and fought for. It had, as a matter of fact, some serious flaws. In certain extremely radical quarters it was criticized as even worse than the Cripps Offer. In the first place the Wavell Plan did not contain any assurance, as there was in the Cripps Offer, that immediately after the war a Constitution framed by the Indians on the basis of complete self-government, inside or outside the empire, would be accepted or implemented forthwith by the British Government. There was also no time limit, nor an assurance of independence outside the Empire if Indians so desired. It may, however, be pointed out here in reply to this criticism that the Secretary of State while discussing the Wavell Plan in Parliament reiterated in unambiguous language that the offer of March 1942 sent to India through Sir Stafford Cripps stood in its entirety. In fact, this plea was put forward by Lord Wavell in reply to Gandhiji's communication to him pointing out the absence of the word 'independence' in the Wavell Offer.

Then there was another defect. The Wavell Plan fell short of the Cripps Plan inasmuch as it did not envisage the appointment of an Indian Defence Member as was done in the Cripps Plan. During a war, the Commander-in-Chief must, of course, retain all his powers as

War Member and plan the higher military strategy. But surely certain less important functions like defence co-ordination, demobilization and post-war reconstruction, public relations, etc. could be taken over by an Indian Defence Member. But the Wavell Plan was silent in this respect.

But these could not be construed as major defects in an interim proposal and, as a matter of fact, were not considered to be so by the political parties in India. There was, however, one very serious drawback in the Wavell Scheme and that was the clause which proposed parity between the 'Caste Hindus' and Muslims in the new Executive Council. 'Caste Hindus' the Viceroy sought to maintain meant Hindus other than scheduled Castes. Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress High Command objected to this clause. Their objection was based on the contention that this was virtually an attempt to divide the Hindu Community between the 'Caste Hindus' and the Depressed Classes. This went against the modern trends in Hinduism which sought to abolish all caste distinctions in spite of the opposition of a few reactionary elements in Hindu society. Mahatma Gandhi who fought all his life for winning an equal status for the Harijans with the so-called 'Caste Hindus' and undertook that historic fast in Poona in 1931 for the achievement of this objective could be no party to such a parity. Immediately after the Viceroy made his broadcast he sent a telegram to Lord Wavell stating that the word 'Caste Hindus' rang untrue and offensive as there were no caste and casteless Hindus who were politically-minded. And then, who would represent the 'Caste Hindus' at the proposed Viceregal Conference? Not the Congress which sought to represent, without distinction, all Indians who desired and worked for independence. Even the Hindu Maha-

sabha which claimed to represent Hindus as such, would not bear the responsibility of representing only the 'Caste Hindus'. 'If the parity between Muslims and "Caste Hindus" was incapable of being altered by the British Government,' the Mahatma stated, 'my advice to the Congress will be not to participate in the formation of an Executive Council.'

Besides, this parity question by implications, clear and obvious, reduced the National Congress to a sectarian organization. This was further confirmed by the exclusion of the Hindu Mahasabha from the Viceregal Conference. 'If the parity between the "Caste Hindus" and Muslims subsists, Congressmen can have no place at the Conference,' said Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. He added : 'The Congress represents Indians belonging to all creeds and races. It can be and has been represented by Muslim, Hindu, Christian and Parsi Presidents. I hope that no nationalist will be a party to any arrangement which has its basis on a religious division.'

The Hindu Mahasabha stood opposed to the Wavell Scheme lock, stock and barrel. Its opposition was based not so much on the avowed distinction sought to be created between the 'Caste Hindus' and the Depressed Classes as between the 'Caste Hindus' and Muslims. The Mahasabha spokesmen condemned the Plan as another Communal Award more monstrous than the Macdonald Award of 1932. They said that the Wavell Plan aimed to sacrifice the Hindus and the national cause at the altar of intransigent communalism. Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee, President of the Hindu Mahasabha, thought that the main purpose of the Wavell Scheme was to placate the Muslim League still further and to crush the legitimate rights of the Hindus. He contended that by no standard of logic, fairplay, equity, or justice could

any honest Government justify the allocation of equal seats to the two communities—Hindus and Muslims—one numbering about two hundred and fifty millions and the other about ninety millions.

Despite all these serious defects in the Plan all the invitees including those belonging to the Congress accepted the Viceroy's invitation to attend the Conference. The objection to the proposal for parity in the new Executive Council was not persisted in, after the Congress President and Mahatma Gandhi saw the Viceroy before the Conference started. The right of the Congress to nominate Muslims in the Council was also recognized; the invitation to Maulana Azad, the Congress President, cleared the doubts of those who saw in the invitation to Mahatma Gandhi only on behalf of the Congress, a subterfuge to dub the Congress a Hindu body. The Congress was alive to the defects in the proposal and it was not blind to the fact that the proposed interim Government left much to be desired. Yet the Congress earnestly worked for the success of the Conference, as it desired that representatives of the people must be at the helm of affairs in those critical days. The war was nearing its end, and the Congress wanted the people to have a voice in shaping the destiny of India in the transition from war to peace.

The Conference ultimately proved a failure and it is a tragedy that it should have been so in spite of the co-operation of the Congress, which undoubtedly reflected the mind of the nation, to work the plan through. The cause for this collapse is admittedly the Muslim League's refusal to agree to non-League Muslims being nominated to the Council. The League President, Mr Jinnah, proved once again intransigent. The Muslim League, he declared, was the only body which represented the Indian

Muslims, and as such, it should have the exclusive right to nominate the Muslim members of the Viceroy's Executive Council. Not only that ; all the Muslims in the Council must of necessity be members of the Muslim League. Lord Wavell naturally could not give such an assurance to the League.

So the Wavell Plan went the way the Cripps Proposals did and the Muslim League put a spoke into the wheel of India's progress on the present occasion, as it has been doing all these years. This was clear in Lord Wavell's farewell address to the Simla Conference. He said: 'When I explained my solution to Mr Jinnah, he told me that it was not acceptable to the Muslim League and he was so decided that I felt that it would be useless to continue the discussion. In the circumstances, I did not show my selections as a whole to Mr Jinnah, and there was no object in showing them to the other leaders. The Conference has, therefore, failed.'

It could not have been otherwise, when Mr Jinnah participated in the Conference. The Congress had gone to the utmost extent to placate the League. It had even accepted the iniquitous clause of parity which reduced the majority community to the position of a minority.

Mr Jinnah's statement to the Press and his correspondence with the Viceroy revealed that the League leader not only insisted that the League should have the right to nominate all the Muslims in the Council but also that grave doubts were aroused in his mind whether the plan would not adversely affect his objective, namely, the establishment of a separate Muslim State. After having originally accepted the fundamentals of the plan in terms of the Viceregal broadcast he later on discovered a 'snare' in the whole plan, set by a 'combination of Gandhi's Hindu Congress, Lord Wavell and Glancy-

Khizar' by entering which the League would have 'signed its death warrant'. After accepting Hindu-Muslim parity at the start, he demanded parity with not only Hindus, but Hindus *plus* all other minority groups! Having first agreed to the Viceroy's assurance about exercising his veto 'not unreasonably' he chose to voice the fear that such an assurance was not enough. If the League's claim had been accepted, it would have been the end of democracy and the imposition of the will of Mr Jinnah not only on all Muslims but the whole of India. Acceptance of the League leader's claim would have meant the disenfranchisement of the whole of the section of the Muslim population which did not subscribe to the League creed. If Mr Jinnah's theory had been accepted, a situation would have developed in India, in which not only would the hands of the clock of progress have been put back, but the flood gates of hatred and bitterness opened to the eternal damnation of this ancient country.

This claim which the Muslim League made was an old one. It was raised when Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, while he was the President of the Congress, approached Mr Jinnah for a League-Congress *rapproachement*. It was repeated when Mr Subhas Chandra Bose called on the League leader later; it was this claim which had led to the failure of the negotiations that had been carried on for the settlement of the communal problem in the past. It had its D-Day in Simla. In view of the importance of this issue and the part it played in all political parleys, it deserves more than a passing examination here.

The Muslim League had been consistently clamouring for recognition as the sole representative of Muslims for some significant reasons. Firstly, non-recognition of this principle would supplant the League from its present

position of being the second important political organization in India and thus help the nationalist Muslim bodies who are rivals to the League to come up to the fore. Secondly, a recognition of this principle would reduce the Congress to a sectarian body representing only the Hindus ; such a position is favourable to the growth of the Muslim League. Thirdly, if this claim of the League were recognized Mr Jinnah's own position of being a virtual dictator of the Indian Muslims would be assured ; non-recognition of this claim would positively effect his leadership in the League. He had been virtually dictating terms in all political parleys for over a decade and if the Muslim League went down, his leadership would be disputed and there might even be an internal defection in the League and the radical elements who were already questioning the wisdom of the present policy of the party might overthrow the present leadership.

But does the League, as Mr Jinnah claims, really represent the entire Indian Muslims ? The undue emphasis which Mr Jinnah lays on the League's claim to be the sole representative of Muslims tends to suggest that he is not sure of what he says. The League claim really means that there are no Muslims in India, worth the name, other than the Leaguers. The claim is absurd, as we find that there are quite a number of important and influential Muslim organizations in India, such as the Azad Muslim Conference, the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind, the Momin Conference, the Ahrar Party, the Majlis-i-Qureshi and the National Mohammadan Association. The spokesmen of these nationalist Muslim bodies have already challenged the League's claim to be the sole representative of Indian Muslims.

In the 1936-37 general elections the Muslim League cut a very sorry figure. In the eight Hindu-majority

provinces the Congress swept the polls and in some of these provinces, notably in the Central Provinces, Orissa, Bihar, and Madras, the Muslim League could not find a single candidate. In Assam and the North-West Frontier Province where the Hindus form only 6½ per cent of the total population, not a single candidate was returned to the Legislature on the League ticket. Even in the other Muslim-majority provinces like the Punjab, Sind and Bengal and also in the United Provinces where the League contested elections, its position was precarious. It got only one seat in the Punjab out of a total of 175, in Bengal 39 out of 129 and in the United Provinces 27 out of 66. Consequently it was unable to form a single Government anywhere in India. The position had no doubt improved thereafter and Muslim League Ministries were installed in four provinces but they were houses of cards which fell at the first gust of a strong wind. By the middle of June, 1945, the Muslim League could retain only two of its Ministries and they were also dependent upon the mercy of the Congress Party. This is substantiated by the many public statements made by the non-League Muslim leaders of India and the telegrams sent by them to the Viceroy during the Simla Conference.

Mr Muhammad Zahiruddin, President of the All-India Momin Conference, which claims, to represent the largest community among the Indian Muslims constituting nearly fifty per cent of the Muslim population of India, says : 'The Muslim League represents mostly the caste and landed Muslim aristocracy, and the poor suppressed classes in the community are as much entitled to a place in the sun as the Leaguers themselves. We have time and again repudiated Mr Jinnah's claim as the solitary spokesman of Indian Muslims. I reiterate with all the emphasis at my command our resolve to stand on our

own feet and never to accept the leadership of the League or its separatist and schismatic ideology.

'The Momin Conference has always stood for an Indian Union of free and independent States in which only such subjects as would affect the common good of the country at large will be in the hands of the Union Government while all other affairs will be left to the constituent units. We have, therefore, always opposed any proposal for a division of India into rival federations or separate sovereign States.'

Mr Abdulla Mistri, on behalf of the All-India Muslim Majlis, repudiating the statement of Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan, the General Secretary of the Muslim League, that out of a total of 600 Muslim seats in the Indian Legislatures, 420 were held by Leaguers, says: 'In general elections in 1936-37, the League could not find a single candidate in the N.-W. F. P., the C. P., Orissa, Bihar, Assam and Madras. In other provinces where the League contested elections, it got one seat in the Punjab out of a total of 175, in Bengal 39 out of 120 and in the United Provinces 27 out of 66.'

This was confirmed by Mr Mohammad Yunus, former Prime Minister of Bihar, who says: 'Not a single candidate was returned to the Bihar Assembly on League ticket in 1936. At present out of 42 Muslim members, only three are returned on League ticket.'

Sir Abdul Halim Ghuznavi, President of the Central National Mohammadan Association, founded by the Right Hon'ble Syed Ameer Ali in 1877, says: 'This Association submits that the Muslim League cannot and does not represent all the Muslims in India.'

Similar views were also expressed by a number of other Muslim parties including the pro-Congress Ahrar Party forming about 20 per cent of the Muslim popula-

tion. The eminent Muslim leaders like Maulana Hussain Ahmed Madni who was a prominent member of the Central Parliamentary Board of the League until 1937, Syed Abdul Latif, the recognized author of the Pakistan Scheme of the Muslim League, Mr Fazlul Huq, former Premier of Bengal and a former Member of the Working Committee of the League, and a host of others also contest of the League claim.

Mr Fazlul Huq says: 'Mr Jinnah's claim that the League members constituted 95 per cent of Muslim members in the Legislatures is belied by facts. When in 1941 I formed a national cabinet with representatives of all parties, only 42 Muslim Leaguers stood in opposition out of a total of 123 Muslim members. I maintained this strength till I resigned in March 1943 when many of my adherents were won over by the League by most questionable methods. In the last voting in the Assembly when the League Ministry was defeated, 51 Muslims voted with the opposition and 61 with the League Ministry.'

To add to all this, a renowned and respected Muslim is the President of the Indian National Congress; the Unionist Party is in power in the Punjab—an important unit in potential Pakistan. Are not these facts sufficient to challenge the League's claim to represent the entire Indian Muslim moiety? But if the League leader still chooses to play with statistics none can save his party from going back to that former insignificant position from which British Imperialists lifted it to the present high pedestal of parity, no doubt in their own interests.

There are some who see in the Viceroy's acceptance of responsibility for the failure of the Simla Conference the hand of Whitehall. They believe that Lord Wavell was authorized to ignore the Muslim League, if necessary; but it is surmised that this authority was with-

drawn at the last moment by the British Government. A similar thing was said about Sir Stafford Cripps. Whether there is any truth in this surmise or not, the fact remains that the Simla Conference could have succeeded if Lord Wavell had by-passed those who obstructed the Conference, thus blocking all national progress. It was not done, and as the Congress President said, the British Government cannot exonerate themselves from this blame.

CHAPTER XIII

PARADOXES

In the political history of India the Muslim League occupies a very important and interesting position—important because, next to the Indian National Congress, it is the best organized and the largest political party in India, and interesting because of its inconsistencies, incongruities and intransigence. Although the Muslim League traces its origin to the day when a deputation of a group of 'loyal Muslims' led by that pompous potentate, the Aga Khan, waited on the then Viceroy, Lord Minto, in October 1906, and solicited 'special British favour for communalist and loyal Muslims', it cannot be said to have achieved any great success as a political body or attracted the attention of the world until Mr Jinnah was chosen to lead it. The importance which it has assumed recently is due primarily to the part it has played in the Indian political field, in its relation to the British Government *vis-a-vis* the Indian struggle for independence.

We are, however, concerned in this book with the genesis and development of the League's wartime politics, its attitude to the war, to the war-time Government of Britain, its stand in regard to the Congress and the question of Hindu-Muslim unity and also its avowed policy towards Indian Muslims, whether belonging to the League or to non-League Muslim political, social or religious institutions.

Ever since the outbreak of the present war in Europe and its rapid spread in the Far East, the politics of the

Muslim League has been paradoxical. Unlike the National Congress it adopted no clear-cut attitude and its war-time policy could be characterized as one of 'sitting on the fence'. For instance, no one in India or abroad really knew until late 1940 what the League would do in respect of the war, would it wholeheartedly co-operate with the British Government or would it go into 'wilderness' like the Congress? It was only late in September, 1940, that the League declared its preparedness 'to help the prosecution of the war and the defence of India' on condition that it was officially recognized by the British Government and given a fixed and large portion of executive power. Its actual demand was that if the Congress agreed to co-operate, the League should be granted equality with the Congress in the matter of representation in the Viceroy's Executive Council but, should the Congress decide otherwise, the League should be in an overwhelming majority in the Council.

The policy of the British Government in regard to the transfer of real power to Indian hands was clear. In none of their pronouncements or actions had they shown at any time any preparedness to transfer real power to Indians, whether Hindus or Muslims, or to any other community. All that they had offered so far was only a shadow and not the substance. The same negative policy was persisted in even during the war, though necessity called for the mobilization of every inch of national resources. The only excuse put forward in defence of this parochial and short-sighted policy was that the British Government could not transfer power in the middle of war in the absence of Hindu-Muslim unity which, they knew well, was almost impossible to achieve as long as Mr Mohammad Ali Jinnah and his League continued consciously or unconsciously to be a pawn in the British game.

And now when the Muslim League demanded adequate and effective power in its hands as a condition precedent to its active participation in the war efforts, no better response came from Whitehall.

Like the Congress, the Muslim League also refused to co-operate in the war efforts, the only difference between the attitude of these two main political organizations being that whereas the former demanded power for Indians at large, the latter's demand was for Indian Muslims, or more precisely, for Muslims of the League. But strangely enough, League members were individually rendering all possible help to the war efforts. It passes one's comprehension how the League as an institution could adopt a negative policy on the issue of war and yet allow its members to violate with impunity its policy 'in individual capacity'. Such a self-contradictory policy not only undermines the prestige of the organization, but it breaks the morale and discipline of the rank and file. But the reason for this inconsistency is not far to seek. Some of the stalwart of the League happen to be full-blooded apologists of the British raj in India and as such cannot but co-operate with the Government's war efforts. If they are to choose between the League and the Government, to abide strictly by the League's fundamental principles or stick to their office in Government, they would prefer the latter alternative. Mr Jinnah knows this well and dares not ask these recalcitrant members to honour the League mandate, for he realizes that with the severance of their connexion, the League would be very much weakened. The zeal and enthusiasm of some of the members of the League to participate in the war efforts even against the clear mandate of the League, to which they belonged, were stronger than their allegiance to the League.

Of course, the League at the outset took disciplinary action against one of its members who joined the Viceroy's expanded Council in violation of the party mandate and also whipped out three others for joining the National Defence Council, but individual members holding high offices in the Government went on actively participating in the war efforts.

This is one of the inconsistencies in the Muslim League's war-time politics. And here is the great difference between the attitude of the Congress and that of the League to the war. Both the organizations decided not to offer their co-operation in the war efforts, though for different reasons; the Congress withdrew all its ministers from the Provinces but the League allowed its ministers to continue in office, which, in other words, meant full participation in the war efforts.

The League passed many resolutions and its leaders often issued fiery statements that they were no less eager than the Congress to fight for Indian independence, but in practice, they meant nothing. The League had been very loud in its protestations of patriotism; and yet it had allowed itself to be made a scapegoat by British Imperialism for denying independence to India. Mr Wilfred Smith who has made a thorough study of modern Islam in India and who has been a lecturer in Islamic History in Lahore describes this aspect of the League in clear and emphatic language: 'It (the Muslim League) became almost explicitly the sole excuse for continued British rule', he says. The British Government since the date of the very foundation of its Indian Empire pursued a predatory policy of 'divide and rule' in the governance of India. They assiduously encouraged conflicts between the two major communities of the land, the Hindus and the Muslims, with this end in view. Even

the British Government or their spokesmen in India did not hide this fact. Some of the dispatches of the British Governor-Generals in India to the 'Home' Government openly revealed this attitude. And this was cleverly translated into practice by bestowing all the favours on one community and ignoring the demands of the other and thus set one against the other. Mr Edward Thompson, the great British friend of Indian freedom, has revealed how this policy worked. In his famous little book, *Enlist India for Freedom*, Thompson says: 'During the Round Table Conference there was a rather obvious understanding and alliance between the more intransigent Moslems and certain particularly undemocratic British political circles. That alliance is constantly asserted in India to be the real block to progress. I believe that I could prove that this is largely true.'

This was also admitted by no less a person than Mr Ramsay Macdonald, the author of the infamous Communal Award. The ex-British Prime Minister said: 'The Mahomedan leaders are inspired by certain Anglo-Indian officials, and these officials have pulled wires at Simla and in London and of malice aforethought, sowed discord between the Hindu and Mahomedan communities by showing the Muslims special favours.'

As regards the antiquity of this kind of policy, Thompson says: 'There is no question that in former times we frankly practised the "divide and rule" method in India. From Warren Hastings' time onward, men made no bones of the pleasure the Hindu-Moslem conflict gave them; even such men as Elphinstone and Malcolm and Metcalfe admitted its value to the British.'

The League's claim that it is also fighting for independence cannot hold water. How can it, when it has no more than one occasion aligned itself with the

British power to the detriment of India's larger interests? The Congress tried its best to arrive at some understanding with the League and solve the communal tangle. Mahatma Gandhi and three successive Presidents of the Congress, Dr Rajendra Prasad, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mr Subhas Chandra Bose carried on negotiations with Mr Jinnah. But they all broke down because every time the League leader raised impossible demands. But the pity of it is that every time there was some talk of negotiations on the Hindu-Muslim unity question, the League spokesmen made the world believe that they were always ready for a *rapproachement*, though not once did they take any initiative in the matter. It was Mahatma Gandhi and other Congress leaders who went to Mr Jinnah's house and Mr Jinnah would 'receive' them with an air as if he, like the old Mogul Emperor, alone could deliver the goods. To quote Mr Smith again, 'The League's method of refusal was to postulate an utterly impossible condition and then to adopt an air of offended generosity when this was not accepted.'

CHAPTER XIV

THE TIRADE

In the history of human progress there are two ways of rising to great eminence. One is the positive way, of achieving name and fame by one's own innate qualities of head and heart and the other is the negative method of attaining success by gradually eliminating enemies. The Muslim League as a political body and its leader, Mr Mahomed Ali Jinnah, have reached dizzy heights of fame today by adopting this negative method. The sacrifices or constructive contributions of the League to the welfare of the Indian Muslims or to the larger cause of the country have been negligible and the position it occupies among the Muslims cannot be attributed to this. It has attained its present stature by its ceaseless tirade against the Congress, the Hindu Mahasabha and against all those who dared to oppose its policy and ideology.

One writer wonders whether the anti-Congress feeling of the Muslim League, the intensity of its hatred for that national organization and the vigour and energy with which it has pursued its quarrel with the Congress do not give one the impression that the sole goal of the League is killing the Congress, rather than strive for the welfare of the Muslim community or even Pakistan. This may be an extreme view but it is not wholly unsupported by facts. The expressions 'Congress Tyranny', 'Congress Machinations', 'Congress Manoeuvres', occur so often in the utterances and statements of Mr Jinnah, that they seem to have become almost an obsession with him. He has never been tired of hurling invective against the

Congress and its leaders and charging them with varied sins of omission and commission. In every move of the Congress, he sees a sinister conspiracy to establish a Hindu Raj at the sacrifice of Muslim interests. The 1940 individual Satyagraha movement which the Congress launched with the sole object of vindicating the elementary right of freedom of speech was characterized by Mr Jinnah as an 'attempt to coerce the British Government to bend to the Congress demands over the head and at the cost of the Muslims'. Whenever any statement or speech was made by the spokesmen of His Majesty's Government in the British Parliament or on a British platform on the India issue, which showed even the slightest tendency to favour the Congress, he hastened to threaten them with 'dire consequences'. Mr Amery has no reputation for pro-Congress leanings and yet when he made that famous 'India First' speech, the League President flew into a rage and accused him of being a protagonist of the Congress view-point! He warned the Secretary of State for India that 'if any concession to the Congress is made which adversely affects or militates against the Muslim demands, it will be resisted by the League with all the power it can command. The League desires to place on record that if the situation demands, it would not hesitate to intervene and play such part in the struggle as may be necessary for the protection of the rights and interests of the Muslims of this country.'

Mr Jinnah's tone and temper and his language in the correspondence with the Congress leaders are far from courteous. It is really unfortunate that Mr Jinnah who is acclaimed by his followers to be one 'round whom revolves the entire gamut of Indian politics, as he holds the key to the Indian situation' and who 'speaks and moves with his characteristic dignity and magnanimity'

should use language that hardly befits his leadership. Unhappily for India he is at times arrogant ; there is no calumny, no vituperation, no scurrilous epithet which he will hesitate to hurl at the Congress. His description of the Congress President, Maulana Azad, the greatest Muslim theologian in India, as a show-boy has become a phrase which is a painful reminder of Mr Jinnah's method of conducting a public controversy. And what did the Maulana do to merit this insult from the League Fuerher ? When the Congress Working Committee at its Delhi meeting formulated the demand for a National Government with a composite cabinet not limited to any single political party, the Congress President telegraphically communicated the decision to the Muslim League and enquired whether such a cabinet would meet with the League approval. Mr Jinnah who had a grievance against the Congress for excluding Muslim Leaguers from the Ministries in the Congress Provinces, instead of appreciating the Congress stand gave vent to his personal feelings and indulged in cheap abuse calling the Congress President a Muslim 'show-boy' in the Congress.

Another pet theme on which the Muslim League harped incessantly in its calumny of the Congress is the work of its Ministries. When the Congress accepted office in most of the Provinces in India as a result of its great victory at the polls in 1936 under the new India Act, a new enthusiasm pulsated the national life of the country. Imprisonment and office are two diametrically opposite things ; and when Congressmen who had spent the best part of their life in prison came to occupy ministerial offices, there were misgivings in the minds of many whether the Congress Ministers would succeed. After all, these jail-birds had no administrative experience, and jail-going was certainly no criterion for such

ability. But to the pleasant surprise of all, the Congress Ministers gave such a good account of themselves that even their bitterest critics who came to scoff, remained to praise. The sincerity of purpose and the singleminded devotion with which these Congress Ministers set themselves to their new tasks and their plans to improve the condition of workers and agriculturists, earned the admiration of the Governors, and even the Secretary of State for India spoke very highly of their administrative ability. These paeans of praise for the Congress Parliamentarians were not to the liking of Mr Jinnah and his League.

The Congress, no doubt, committed the initial mistake of not including any League Muslim in their Cabinets but particular care was taken to see that Muslim and other minority interests were not neglected; their problems, in fact, received the best and impartial attention from the Congress Ministries. Instead of giving the Devil his due, the Muslim League began finding faults in the Congress administration and made mountains out of molehills. The League formed a sub-committee to investigate the various allegations of 'oppression' and 'coercion' against the Congress Ministries, who, it was alleged, were acting against the interests of Indian Muslims. This Committee submitted a comprehensive report which later came to be known as the Pirpur Report. The League found fault with all the constructive activities of the Congress Cabinets and made scurrilous attacks against them, characterizing them as attempts to 'Hinduise' everything they could lay their hands on. The Pirpur Report catalogued exhaustively the 'Congress atrocities' perpetrated against the Indian Muslims in the various Provinces under Congress administration. Even the harmless social and educational reforms introduced by the

Congress Governments which earned high approbation from all other quarters of the country were not spared in the Pirpur Report. Let us examine in detail some of the charges levelled against the Congress in the Pirpur Report in view of the importance given to them.

The Vidya Mandir scheme of the C. P. Ministry was condemned by the Pirpur Committee on the fantastic ground that the word 'Mandir' in common parlance meant a place of idol worship. The Committee said that the very name of the scheme 'goes against the grain of Islamic tenets and becomes repulsive to a Muslim'. This 'anti-Islamic' name to a scheme of education, whatever the essential merits of the scheme itself, could not therefore but aim to benefit the Hindu community only at the cost of the Muslims! This is queer logic indeed to damn a whole scheme without examining it in detail for the simple reason that it had a Hindu name!

The Wardha Education Scheme which received high admiration even from a foreign educational expert like Mr John Sargent, the Educational Commissioner to the Government of India, and which was approved by the Jamia Milia, possibly one of the most renowned Muslim educational institutions of India, shared no better fate and was characterized as an attempt to run roughshod over Muslim culture and education.

The Congress Government of Bombay imposed a Property Tax which was condemned by the Muslim League as another attempt by the Congress to kill Muslim property owners. Strangely enough, it did not occur to the Muslim League that the Hindus themselves had no small stake in respect of property in Bombay, let alone the Parsis, the Iranis and other communities. Violent demonstrations were organized in Bombay as a protest against the Property Tax on the day on which Prohibition was

to come into force, and the mob became so unruly that a few shots had to be fired by the police to quell the infuriated demonstrators. Property Tax was introduced to supplement the deficit in income caused by the Prohibition Scheme. Opposition to the levying of Property Tax by Muslims was, therefore, to some extent, opposition to the Prohibition Scheme itself ; prohibition, it must be mentioned, is one of the cardinal tenets of the Holy Quran.

The All-India Muslim League adopted a resolution on the *Bande Mataram* controversy at its Lucknow Session condemning the attitude of the Congress in 'foisting *Bande Mataram* as the National anthem upon the country in callous disregard of the feeling of the Muslims'. The League considered this song 'not only positively anti-Islamic and idolatrous in its inspiration and ideas, but definitely subversive of the growth of genuine nationalism in India'! The Congress Working Committee issued a lengthy statement on this issue and dropped certain stanzas ; the poem after these emendations contained no word or phrase that would offend anybody. But this did not satisfy the League which took exception even to these remaining stanzas because of the 'historical background of the song and the sentiments which led to its composition'. What was this background and what were these sentiments the League did not think it necessary to explain.

The *Bande Mataram* song has been associated with Indian nationalism for more than thirty years and many were the sacrifices which Indians have endured with that national song on their lips. It used to be sung at all Congress gatherings and Mr Jinnah when he was a stalwart Congressman did not find it objectionable. But within these thirty years, many changes have come

over Mr Jinnah though the song has remained the same ; and it has now become objectionable, in spite of the deletion of a portion of it !

The Pirpur Report further objected to the lifting of the ban on the song in Government schools. The ban was imposed by the Government of the pre-reform days and was directed against Indian nationalism : popular Ministries, when they came to power, considered it their duty to lift the ban. Moreover, the Government ordered only the lifting of the ban and it did not necessarily mean that the singing of the song was obligatory. As such, there could have been no objection to the lifting of the ban itself. But these arguments did not satisfy the League.

The Pirpur Report also objected to the hoisting of the Congress Tri-colour flag, though it contained the Muslim green. This objection could have been upheld if the Congress Government had issued specific orders that only the Congress flag and no other should be hoisted. But there were no such orders and there was no ban on the Muslim League's communal flag. But the League's objection was based upon the contention that without a settlement of the points in dispute and without unity of purpose between the two communities, the inclusion of the Muslim colour in the Congress flag was meaningless. The Pirpur Report said:

'The flag should represent the true feelings and sentiments of the Muslim community if it is to have any significance at all, but unfortunately it does not.'

Well, if it does not, whose fault is it?

Objection was also taken to the measures adopted by the Congress Government to protect cows. This policy was prompted purely by economic considerations and this was explained by Mahatma Gandhi himself when

opening the Cow Exhibition at the Haripura Congress. Gandhiji said:

'From the historical and economic point of view the cow must be protected. Unfortunately we have not taken cow protection seriously. Due to our carelessness, idleness and ignorance, good breeds of cows are now vanishing. At present nothing is done to protect cows and consequently they are proving a burden on the economic life.'

But the Pirpur Report had given a religious colour to this well-defined economic aspect of the problem. It said:

'Mahatma Gandhi's fundamental motives are religious and he has repeatedly declared that his object in life is to bring religion into politics. Moreover, the Mahatma's religion is based on the fundamental Hindu scripture, the Bhagavadgita.'

One cannot argue with the authors of the Pirpur Report. One begins to doubt whether they ever intended others to take the report seriously. If they did, the only comment is that they seem to suffer from an obsession and that they cannot be argued out of it.

The Muslim League had its grievances in respect of its share in Government services. The attempt of the Congress Government to abolish communal representation in Government service, a measure only to increase efficiency irrespective of distinctions of caste or community, was bitterly resented by the Pirpur Committee. They alleged that the Congress Government was trying to eliminate Muslims from the services ; the Report said:

'The other method that is employed for preventing Muslims from getting appointment is by reducing the maximum age for various posts and by raising the standard of qualifications.'

This argument betrays inferiority complex. If it was

contended that the raising of the standard of qualifications prevented Muslims from getting into Government services, it can only mean that Muslim candidates as a class had a lower standard of qualifications than Hindus. Equally fallacious was the argument that a reduction in the maximum age for appointments stood in the way of Muslim's getting them, unless it was admitted that the Muslim candidates acquired the requisite standard of qualifications much later than the Hindu candidates.

The Pirpur Report also cited many other instances of hardship, ill-treatment and injustice that were supposed to have been perpetrated by the various Congress Governments on the Muslims. The Report alleged that the Congress regimes were showing partiality to Hindus as against Muslims, that they were fanning communal passion leading to frequent outbreak of riots in many places, and were excluding Muslims from local bodies and debt conciliation boards ; Congress leaders, it was alleged, refused to acknowledge the very existence of a separate Muslim culture in India and suppressed their language and exercised undue influence on the Muslims, and muzzled their press. Closing of Muslim burial grounds, suspension of scholarships to Muslims, encroachment on social and religious rights of the Muslims were some of the other charges brought against the Congress Ministry. It is needless to say most of these will not stand impartial scrutiny.

The League was so dead-set against the Congress Government that when the Congress Ministries resigned on the war issue, Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah called upon Muslims to celebrate a Day of Deliverance from 'Congress oppression' and pray to God for deliverance.

This short-sighted policy only embittered further relation between the Congress and the Muslim League.

Mr Jinnah's appeal to the Muslims to celebrate the Day of Deliverance aroused a keen controversy in the country and the consensus of opinion was that the appeal should be withdrawn. The League President, however, did not relent. In justification he repeated the allegations contained in the Pirpur Report. These charges were emphatically repudiated by the Congress spokesmen. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Chairman of the Central Congress Parliamentary Board, which controlled and directed the Ministries, stated that all the charges were totally false and unwarranted. He stated:

'Every Premier at my instance had invited his Governor unhesitatingly to intervene in matters affecting the rights and the interests of the minorities whenever the Governor felt that the action of the ministry was not correct. When Mr Jinnah recently made the charges, I again instructed every Premier to invite the Governor's attention to them as they also affected him and I was informed that the Governor considered the charges unwarranted.'

This was a sensational revelation and in order to do justice to the minorities the Congress Ministries which, prior to accepting office fought so stubbornly against the use of Governors' special powers, themselves unhesitatingly invoked Governors' intervention in their eagerness to be fair to the minorities. One would think that this would convince Mr Jinnah as it had done the world, and the matter would rest there. But it did not, and Mr Jinnah went on saying that he had overwhelming evidence in support of the League case.

Not only that. Dr Rajendra Prasad, the President of the Congress, wrote to the League President that the Congress was prepared to request the highest judicial authority in the land, Sir Maurice Gwyer, or some other

suitable person to investigate all specific charges which the Muslim League might formulate against the Ministries of the Congress-governed provinces. But Mr Jinnah was elusive and raised all sorts of technical objections and turned down this sporting offer as 'unsound and unpractical'. Mr Jinnah curtly told the Congress President that he had already placed the matter before the Governor-General and had requested him to take executive action without delay 'to safeguard and to secure justice for the minorities'.

No executive action was, however, taken by the Governor-General. Possibly none was called for.

CHAPTER XV

THE IMPOSSIBILITY

The communal disharmony in India is, in the language of Percival Spear, like the English weather. Every one complains of it but no one seems able to alter it. No other factor has proved to be a greater stumbling block to the national salvation of India than the communal problem and no other problem has disturbed the otherwise serene atmosphere of this country as it has done. Every Indian who loves his motherland complains of the communal tangle, but yet nobody has been able to solve it. And the tangle shall never be solved as long as there remains in India a third party to prevent its settlement. What De Valera said to Lloyd George in connexion with Ireland applies to India in full measure. 'We cannot admit the right of the British to mutilate our country either in its own interest or at the call of any section of our population. We do not contemplate the use of force. If your own Government stands aside, we can effect a complete reconciliation.'

The words of De Valera spoken in 1918 are particularly applicable to India in 1945. Whatever the complications, however impossible the solution of the communal problem in India appears to be, it is certainly not beyond a workable solution, if no third party remains here to encourage one section of the population against another. The British policy of 'Divide and Rule' has always stood in the way of an amicable settlement, even if one of the communities is prepared to make the maximum sacrifice in the interest of a lasting peace and amity.

This discord which has become almost chronic in the body politic of India has put the clock of progress back by many years.

A reading of the history of India will show that the origin of the communal problem dates back to the time when the Britishers were consolidating their position as rulers of India. We have already shown in a foregoing chapter how the various Governor-Generals in India utilized the Indian communal differences as a convenient tool to perpetuate their domination of the land. The climax of this policy was reached when Mr Ramsay Macdonald thrust his Communal Award on India in 1932 in spite of the opposition of an overwhelming majority of the Indian population. Since the day when this apple of discord was thrown in this land, India has known no peace, she has not made any political progress and could effect no understanding between the two principal communities, the Hindus and Muslims.

Mahatma Gandhi is perhaps the one man in India who has made the greatest efforts for arriving at a communal settlement. In an eventful political career of more than half a century, if there is any issue dearest to his heart, next to his creed of truth and non-violence, it is the communal solution. In his every utterance, every statement he appeals for a solution of this problem. He has neglected no opportunity and spared no effort to advance this cause ; and ever since he started *Young India* he has issued in its columns innumerable and insistent appeals to his countrymen to resolve their differences and come to a settlement. Even today, he hopes and pleads for Hindu-Muslim unity.

Let us cite one or two instances to show how close to his heart is the solution of the problem. Mr Jinnah in his presidential speech at the Delhi session of the Mus-

lim League in 1943 discussed the communal issue and invited the Mahatma to write to him on this issue. These were his words:

'If he has made up his mind, what is there to prevent Mr. Gandhi, from writing direct to me ? He is writing letters to the Viceroy. Why does he not write to me direct ? Who is there that can prevent him from doing so ? . . . I cannot believe for a single moment—strong as the Government may be in this country—I cannot believe that they will have the daring to stop such a letter if it is sent to me.'

Gandhiji was in jail at that time. When he read the proceedings of the League in the papers supplied to him in prison, he welcomed Mr Jinnah's invitation and hastened to write to him and requested the Government of India to forward his letter to the proper quarters. But the Home Department declined to comply with his request, blindly following their policy of not giving any facilities for political correspondence to a person detained 'for promoting an illegal mass movement which he has not disavowed and thus gravely embarrassing India's war effort at a critical time.' The Mahatma wrote back to Government to reconsider their decision in the interest of a solution of the communal problem, on which His Majesty's Government had laid so much stress in their utterances. He wrote: 'I have always been anxious to meet the Qaid-e-Azam if perchance we could devise some solution of the communal tangle which might be generally acceptable.'

But the Government remained firm and satisfied themselves by issuing a cryptic 'communique' saying that the Government of India had received a request from Gandhiji to forward a short letter from himself to Mr Jinnah expressing a wish to meet him.

But what was Mr Jinnah's reaction when he learnt from the Government *communique* that the Mahatma did write to him in response to his own open invitation to do so and that the letter was stopped by the Government? The country believed that the Government had treated him unceremoniously, and people expected that he would take up the Government's challenge. But Mr Jinnah found himself on the horns of a dilemma. If he accepted the Government challenge, the very existence of the League which was thriving on British favouritism would be threatened. If he did not, his own leadership would be at stake, for not only would he go down in the estimation of his countrymen but even his own people in the League would be embarrassed at his 'volte face'.

A leading Muslim League Minister, it was reported, on reading the news of the Government's refusal to forward Gandhiji's letter to Mr Jinnah, prepared a lengthy statement of protest and suggested that all the Muslim League Ministers should send at once their letters of resignation to Mr Jinnah to be used by him if and when he considered necessary.

But Mr Jinnah was not going to risk a fight. After all he never meant seriously what he had said and his statement was intended only as a propaganda stunt for foreign consumption to put the Mahatma in the wrong and to lead the world to believe that he was eager for a *rapprochement*! He never thought that Gandhiji would call his bluff by responding to his invitation. He pulled himself out of this peculiar predicament by putting on a contrariness hardly becoming in the leader of a great party instead of giving a fight to the Government as he had threatened. He pretended to smell a rat in Gandhiji's letter, and in his enthusiasm to maintain his

good relations with the British Government dubbed the letter, of which he could not have known the contents, as 'a move on his part to embroil the Muslim League to come into clash with the British Government solely for the purpose of helping his release, so that he would be free to do what he pleases thereafter'.

That even Mr Jinnah could impute such a base motive to a great and universally respected leader like Mahatma Gandhi was something unexpected. Mr Jinnah did not stop at that. He went on describing the sort of letter Gandhiji should have written to him. He now suggested that Gandhiji should have written to him 'indicating that he was prepared to retrace his steps and abandon his policy and programme culminating in the resolution of the A. I. C. C. of August 8, and was even now willing to come to a settlement with the Muslim League on the basis of Pakistan'. He had not a word to say about Government's action in stopping the letter.

This attitude of Mr Jinnah was criticized not only by Congressmen but even by independent Muslim leaders all over the country. Thus said Dr Abdul Latif who is reputed to be the original author of Mr Jinnah's pet theory of Pakistan:

'Mr Jinnah had a splendid opportunity to play the role of mediator between the Congress and the British Government and bring about a reconciliation and achieve the League's objective too with their mutual goodwill. But obsessed as he is with his innate and insatiate desire to humiliate his political opponents, particularly Mahatma Gandhi, he could not display qualities befitting that role. Mr Jinnah's latest behaviour has placed the League in a decidedly false position. What is Muslim politics worth if it chooses to discard its moral touch? The hour indeed calls for a serious searching of heart on the part of the

League's Working Committee and Council and for a re-orientation of their policy and method of work. Or else they will be leaving for the younger generation a legacy of troubles by no means easy to surmount.'

All previous efforts of the Congress leaders to effect a communal understanding had also been foiled by the League. When three successive Presidents of the Congress knocked at Mr Jinnah's door, no encouraging response came from the League President. The reasons which he advanced for his intransigence were many, but the most important of all his excuses was his claim and insistence that the Muslim League was the sole representative of the entire body of Indian Muslims and should first be recognized as such before any negotiations could be started. This claim he put forth even in the year 1937 when in the general elections the Muslim League was nowhere in the picture. We have already seen while discussing the Wavell Plan how the acceptance of the League's claim to represent exclusively the entire Muslim population of India would only mean dis-enfranchisement of that section of the Muslim population which had no faith in the League programme or in Mr Jinnah's leadership. Moreover the National Congress whose membership includes all communities—with many eminent Muslims—on its roll would automatically become a sectarian Hindu body overnight if it conceded Mr Jinnah's claims. All negotiations with Mr Jinnah for a settlement of the communal problem, therefore bore no fruit.

Let us take another instance—the now famous, Gandhi-Jinnah negotiations which took place in September, 1944. As usual, it was the Mahatma again who took the initiative and wrote to Mr Jinnah in July from Panchgani where he had been recuperating, for a meeting with him. He made a fervent appeal to the Qaid-e-

Azam: 'Don't regard me as the enemy of Islam or of the Muslims of this country. I am the friend and servant of not only yourself but of the whole world. Do not disappoint me,' Gandhiji said. During the negotiations, Gandhiji tried to get from Mr Jinnah a clear enunciation of the Lahore resolution. The basis on which Gandhiji proceeded was the Rajaji Formula. But after battling for three weeks with these two schemes the two leaders parted without either converting or convincing each other to their own viewpoint. Gandhiji pointed out to Mr Jinnah that he had already approved of the Rajaji Formula which conceded the substance of the League demand and which, in Rajaji's own words, 'conceded all that the Muslim League had ever demanded in its Pakistan Resolution'. But that did not commend itself to Mr Jinnah.

Even before the Gandhi-Jinnah talks began he had condemned the Rajaji Formula as a 'parody, a negation of and intended to torpedo the Muslim League's resolution of March 1940'. He insisted that if the Rajaji Formula or Gandhiji's own formula which he later put to the Qaid-e-Azam had conceded the substance of the Lahore Resolution, then the Mahatma should accept the resolution itself in full. But Gandhiji could not do so. He explained at a Press Conference that although the League resolution did not say so, a searching analysis of the same and the Gandhi-Jinnah correspondence showed that it was based on the two-nation theory. Further, he had to examine the resolution in the light of the interpretation put upon it by Qaid-e-Azam in his numerous speeches and statements. It was indisputable that the resolution, while it did not actually mention that theory, was based upon it. The Qaid-e-Azam insisted upon that point. Therefore, Gandhiji urged that if he could accept the principle of division of India in accordance with the

demand of the League, but without accepting the two-nation theory, Mr Jinnah should be satisfied. But unfortunately it was just there they broke. Mr Jinnah was not satisfied with the recognition of the principle of division of India, to which Gandhiji agreed in the teeth of overwhelming opposition, and thus the prospect of a settlement vanished.

Mr Jinnah seemed to be in a mood to preserve the atmosphere of cordiality that had resulted from the negotiation. He characterized Gandhiji's subsequent explanation of the causes of the break-down of the negotiation as an attempt for 'inciting Mussalmans' against him.

What is wanted for a fair solution of the communal problem in India is the attitude of give-and-take on both sides. But the League would not adopt it. That the Congress should recognize the Muslim League as the sole representative body of the entire Indian Muslims, that the Congress should acknowledge that it was only a Hindu body representing none but Hindus, that the Pakistan Resolution should be accepted in full and on the League's terms, and that there should be parity between Hindus who constituted seventy-five per cent of the population and Muslims who were only twenty-five per cent—these were the conditions set out by the League as the fixed price for a communal *rapprochement*. Negotiations in which it is 'all take and no give' for one side do not lead anywhere.

And this very Qaid-e-Azam was once, long before this honorific title was bestowed on him, hailed by Gopal Krishna Gokhale as the 'finest Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity'. There was a time when even after his leaving the Congress the very same Mr Jinnah contradicted a report which said that he had called the Congress a Hindu Body. In 1925 when the *Times of India*

misreported one of his speeches, Mr Jinnah hastened to correct the report in a letter to the Editor of the paper. He wrote on the occasion :

'I wish again to correct the statement which is attributed to me and to which you have given currency more than once and now again repeated by your correspondent "Banker" in the second column of your issue of the 1st October, that I denounced the Congress as "A Hindu institution". I publicly corrected this misleading report of my speech in your column soon after it appeared; but it did not find a place in the columns of your paper and so may I request you to publish this and oblige.

The Qaid-e-Azam was demanding special safeguards for the Muslim minority of 'a hundred millions'; he insisted that the Viceroy must exercise the veto, because he feared that Muslim interests were in jeopardy at the hands of the Hindu Executive Councillors at the Centre ; he wanted communal representation by means of separate electorates, adequate safeguards for the protection of Muslim culture and for the promotion of Muslim education, language, religion, personal laws and Muslim charitable institutions, and weightage for the Muslims in provinces where they are in a minority. Today he wants a separate State. It is hard to believe that this is the same Jinnah who once strongly criticized his co-religionists in the Assembly and said :

'Do you want concessions? I don't want them. It is no good appealing to the Hindus. Seventy millions of Muslims are a power in the country and you can dictate to the Government and to the Hindus. Let us show a manly attitude.'

Today seventy millions have grown into a hundred millions and yet all conceivable concessions have become necessary !

CHAPTER XVI

THE CLIMAX

The year 1940 marked a turning point in the history of the Muslim League. I have tried to trace in the foregoing chapters the growing intransigence of the Muslim League. Since its inception it has been gradually raising its demand higher and higher. Mr K. M. Munshi in his book *Akhand Hindustan* shows how this policy developed stage by stage. According to him, the first stage of Muslim demands was reached when separate representation was petitioned for by the Muslim deputation which waited on Lord Minto in 1906. The Minto-Morley Reforms in 1909 recognized this principle when separate constituencies were created for the Muslims, though a section of the Nationalist Muslims including Saiyad Hussan Imam and Mr Mohammad Ali Jinnah opposed this scheme in the interests of national solidarity.

The second stage was reached when Muslims from a religious minority were accepted as a political minority. In October 1919, the famous Memorandum of the Nineteen was submitted. Immediately a few Muslim leaders asked for separate representation in the Punjab and the C.P., fixation of the numerical strength in Legislatures, and safeguards against religious legislation. At the Lucknow Congress, December 1916, the Lucknow Pact was signed. By this Pact, the Muslims gained heavy weightage in the Legislatures. The Lucknow Pact was accepted by the Montford Report.

The third stage of the Muslim demand was reached when the British constituted themselves the guardians and

trustees of Muslim interests against the nation as a whole. The Montford Council Reports record the ever-growing claims of the Muslim communalists. Hindu-Muslim riots became a normal feature of the country. The British Administration showed itself against the Hindus and was hostile to the Congress, the national organization. Even the majority of the Muslim leaders who had been parties to the Lucknow Pact began making fresh demands. They wanted 14 more concessions before they could work for national freedom ! These points included, among others : (1) retention of weightage for the Muslims in the six provinces where they had already secured it, (2) a fixed and unalterable majority in Bengal and the Punjab, and (3) creation of two Muslim provinces, Sind and N.-W.F.P. These points were put forward as a *quid pro quo* for joint electorates. The Hindus opposed this proposal, as they had done so many other unreasonable demands. The Simon Commission opposed the second demand. The British Prime Minister, as an arbitrator, however, threw the apple of discord by granting all these, except the demand that residual powers must vest in the provinces. This they did more in British interests than in those of India. The nationalists and the Hindus lost all they were fighting for and the British saw to it that they did not get the joint electorates.

The fourth stage, Mr Munshi says, came when not content with protection as a religious and political minority, the Muslims demanded, and the British conceded, their right to secure parity with the rest of India, without any commitment as to national solidarity. The appetite of the disruptionists grew with what they were fed on, and the lessons which Hitler was teaching the world came in useful. Muslims were no longer a political minority in India. The disruptionists claimed that the Muslims

were a national minority like the Südeten Germans.

That stage was reached when the Muslim League assumed the role of a dictator and demanded, as said above, equality of status for Muslims with the rest of India. The League's demands, *inter alia*, in 1938 were : (1) that residual powers must be left with the provinces, (2) statutorily fixed share in the services, (3) protection for personal law and culture, freedom of religious practice, protection of the right to slaughter cows, (4) 'Bande Mataram' to be discontinued ; Tri-colour flag to be given up or Muslim League flag to be accepted as equal to the Tri-colour, (5) Muslim League to be recognized as the only representative organization of the Muslims in the country, and (6) coalition ministries in the provinces.

These demands, if accepted, would deprive the Congress of its national character. In effect, the League demand constituted a threat to India's nationhood and was foreign to ideas of democracy. A minority was arrogating to itself the right to be treated as a high negotiating party with the rest of the country!

It was in 1939 that the fifth stage came. The Muslim League demands had grown further by now. The cry now was for fifty per cent representation of Muslims in legislatures and services, and acceptance of Urdu as the national language. No Sanskrit word was to be tolerated, though it was the sacred language of thirty crores of Indians!

The League appetite was not satisfied even then, and in 1940 Pakistan was ushered into the politics of India, at the Lahore Session of the League. The Muslims were no longer a national minority, but a nation. And they wanted a separate State. The Congress was only a national Congress of the Hindu nation.

Pakistan was the culmination of Muslim League

demands which overshadowed everything else. The country was startled by this sensational claim to nationhood by the Muslims who were only a community, but Mr Jinnah, the greatest exponent of separatism, proclaimed to the world that by any definition or test of a nation the Muslims were a nation. He expounded his theory as follows :

'We are a nation of hundred millions, and what is more, we are a nation with our distinctive culture and civilization, language and literature, art and architecture, names and nomenclature, sense of value and proportion, legal laws and moral codes, customs and calendar, history and traditions, aptitudes and ambitions, in short we have our own distinctive outlook on life and of life. By all canons of international law we are a nation.'

And therefore, there must be territorial redistribution of India among the Muslims in the North-Western and North-Eastern Zones to be known as the Pakistan area and the Hindus in the rest of the country. This was the turning point in League politics, for after the adoption of the Pakistan resolution, the division of India became its sole aim. No longer did the Leaguers claim separate representation, no longer did they want a fifty-fifty share in the administration, neither was there any longer a demand for safeguards and protection for their religion or culture. Pakistan was the slogan ; the cry of Pakistan now rent the air ; Pakistan had become the League's creed, its article of faith. Complete division of India into Pakistan and Hindustan and nothing short of it !

In view of the importance which the League demand has assumed, it is necessary to quote the relevant portion of the Lahore Resolution and examine at some length the genesis and development of this separatist idea and

how far it fits in with the conception of the modern world and to what extent it serves the interests of the Indian Muslims themselves. The Lahore Resolution, *inter alia*, stated :

'Resolved that it is the considered view of this Session of the All-India Muslim League that no constitutional plan would be workable in this country or acceptable to the Muslims unless it is designed on the following basic principles, viz., that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions, which should be so constituted, with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary, that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority as in the North-Western and Eastern zones of India should be grouped to constitute " Independent States " in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign.

'That adequate, effective and mandatory safeguards should be specifically provided in the constitution for minorities in these units and in the regions for the protection of their religious, cultural, economic, political, administrative and other rights and interests in consultation with them, and in other parts in India where the Mussalmans are in a minority, adequate, effective and mandatory safeguards shall be specifically provided in the constitution for them and other minorities for the protection of their religions, culture, economic, political, administrative and other rights and interests in consultation with them.

'This Session further authorises the Working Committee to frame a scheme of constitution in accordance with these basic principles, providing for the assumption finally by the respective regions of all powers such as defence, external affairs, communications, customs and such other matters as may be necessary.'

The League demand was paving the way for the

complete destruction of India's centuries-old unity and integrity and isolationism for the Muslims in Pakistan from the rest of India.

This separatist idea took a definite shape only a decade ago. Various theories are advanced about the origin of the scheme. Mr W. C. Smith says that about 1933 a campaign was launched in Cambridge to spread the idea of Pakistan, that is, the creation of a separate State in North-West India, an area populated principally by the Muslims. Later another State in North-East India was also suggested.

The first official reference to such a scheme was made even earlier by Sir Muhammad Iqbal in his presidential address to the Muslim League Session in 1930, but it did not attract much attention then. 'I would like to see', Sir Muhammad incidentally said in his speech, 'the Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan amalgamated into a single State.' But Sir Muhammad himself had not much faith in the Pakistan Plan. This has been revealed by Mr Edward Thompson, who says:

'In the *Observer* I once said that he (Sir Muhammad) supported the Pakistan Plan. Iqbal was a friend and he set my misconception right. After speaking of his own despondency at the chaos he saw coming "over my vast undisciplined and starving land" he went on to say that he thought the Pakistan Plan would be disastrous to the British Government, disastrous to the Hindu community, disastrous to the Muslim community. "But I am the President of the Muslim League and therefore, it is my duty to support it."

The real author of the Pakistan theory seems to be Dr Sayyid Abdul Latif of Hyderabad who gave it a definite constitutional shape and form. The League itself

has admitted that he was the first in the field to have nursed the idea of granting each cultural zone, Hindu or Muslim, a sovereign existence, and the first to outline a constitution for India on that basis. Although the Muslim League Resolution sponsored later at the instance of Mr Jinnah is based on Dr Latif's original scheme for the formation of Muslim Sovereign States in North-West and North-East Zone, there is vast difference between the Pakistan of Mr Jinnah's conception which Dr Latif calls as 'Pakistan in Isolation' and the theory of Dr Latif. Mr Jinnah insists that the Pakistan States should remain in isolation and should have no constitutional relation with the rest of India. Dr Latif, on the other hand, holds, as revealed in the book *Pakistan Issue*, edited by Nawab Nazir Yar Jung Bahadur, that such an attitude will prove suicidal to the Pakistan States. He firmly believes that in the abiding interests of these States themselves and of the thinly distributed Muslim minorities in Hindu Zones, they should, while enjoying perfect freedom or autonomy in their internal affairs, link themselves to the rest of India to administer with others on terms of equality a minimum of subjects indispensably common to the whole of India.

The Muslim League has not laid down a clear-cut definition of Pakistan, neither is any authoritative elucidation of the numerous implications involved in this new-fangled theory, in clear and unambiguous terms available. Surely, important and controversial issues like plebiscite, pan-Islamism, position of the Indian States territories, demarcation—whether it should take place during the pendency of the British rule or thereafter,—the economic status of the Pakistan area, defence and similar matters of common concern, and many other points require full clarification and discussion and the people of India, parti-

cularly those opposed to this radical scheme, are entitled to ask for complete details on all these issues before they could come to a decision.

But whenever any demand for clarification or elucidation was made, Mr Jinnah proved elusive and vague in his answer and insisted that the principles of partition of India as envisaged in the Pakistan Plan must first be recognized and other details could be worked out subsequently.

The Congress was prepared to consider the League proposal if it was presented in a concrete form, and a statement to this effect was issued by the Congress President in April, 1941. But this offer was contemptuously rejected and Mr Jinnah insisted on prior recognition of the principle of division before discussing details. Possibly it was a part of the League plan to keep the details of the plan deliberately vague and in the back-ground. Perhaps it was apprehended that if the details were revealed the various draw-backs of the Plan might be exposed and thereby alienate the sympathy of those who at the first sight were attracted by the vague ideal. 'It has to be kept as a roseate and undefined goal,' said Mr Smith explaining the League's attitude not to publish details of the proposal. Even with regard to the Muslim claim that the Muslims of India were a nation, there was no proof. And there was no parallel to such a claim in the world's history. Mahatma Gandhi in the course of his protracted negotiations with Mr Jinnah brought this to his notice when he said:

'I find no parallel in history for a body of converts and their descendants claiming to be a nation apart from the parent stock. If India was one nation before the advent of Islam it must remain one in spite of the change of faith of a very large body of her children.'

The history of India does not bear out Mr Jinnah's contention that the Muslims are a separate nation. Even during the period of Muslim rule both the Hindus and Muslims lived side by side in perfect harmony and peace and the Hindus rendered effective help to the Muslim rulers ungrudgingly. Was not a Man Singh or a Todur Mull an asset to the greatest of the Moghul Rulers of India? Did not Man Singh fight his brother and co-religionist, Pratap Singh, in the famous battle of Haldighat on behalf of Akbar the Great? Hindu blood flowed freely on the plain of Plassey when the Muslim Nawab Sirajadullah fought Clive. Did not the valiant Mohanlal and Mir Madan lay down their lives in the battle of Plassey for the preservation of Muslim rule?

Coming to the present times, the Hindus and Muslims are living in the Indian villages very closely and intimately and participate in each other's social functions readily. If of late, we find a slight change in the situation in the rural areas, it is because the poison of Pakistan has trickled to those areas disturbing the harmony of an otherwise peaceful rural life. And yet Mr Jinnah thinks that the Hindus and Muslims have altogether a different outlook of and on life.

At best it is highly doubtful if Pakistan is really in the interests of the Indian Mussalmans. A close and dispassionate analysis of the project and the conditions in India will convince any non-partisan that it is neither sound, nor will it do any good even to the Muslims or the country at large. It may be a strategy to satisfy the vanity of the League leaders or to wrest more and yet more from the Hindus who are in a mood to appease them. Politically, economically, culturally or from the point of view of religion it will only result in the ruin of the Muslims in the Pakistan Zone.

In a world which is threatened by aggression, isolationism is an anachronism and a positive evil. We have seen the effect of the Balkanization of Europe. Who among the authors of the Versailles Treaty ever thought that another holocaust, even much greater in magnitude and intensity, would visit Europe within a period of two decades? Yet it did happen and as long as Central Europe is divided into several tiny States with no sufficient man-power and resources for an adequate and effective defence of their countries, war will continue to be a periodic visitation. But the Muslim League refuses to see the writing on the wall and in its mad onrush is fast forcing India into a division at a time when the greatest measure of agreement is necessary among the various communities to ensure inter-dependence. They do not learn from the tragic experience of Belgium, Prussia, Austria and Hungary during the last war, or of Poland, Czechoslovakia or Greece in World War II. These small territories have demonstrated how isolationism in the modern world is dangerous from the political point of view.

The position is no better from the cultural point of view also. The minorities both in Hindustan and Pakistan will be under the thumb of the majority community. The culture of the minorities stands the risk of being crushed. No attention is likely to be given for its development and at best, it will be given an inferior place. There are some who advocate the pernicious theory that minorities will be treated as hostages in both the States. This certainly would be of no help to the minorities concerned and would only lead to internecine war between Hindustan and Pakistan.

But the greatest objection to Pakistan is on economic grounds. Adequate financial resources are the first requi-

site of a good government. Without sufficient finance, no development, political, social or cultural, is possible. Now, what would be the financial position of the contemplated Pakistan territories? Dr B. R. Ambedkar, in his *Thoughts on Pakistan,* has calculated the total net revenue of Pakistan as Rs. 36 crores. He arrived at this figure by deducting Rs. 24 crores which the Hindu-majority *blocs* in Pakistan would yield and which could not be annexed to Pakistan, from the total Pakistan revenue of Rs. 60 crores. Would this paltry sum of Rs. 36 crores be enough for the maintenance of Pakistan? It would have two deficit provinces in its territory, Sind and the N.-W. F. P. Even with the heavy Central subvention of Rs. 1 crore each, these two provinces have not been able to wipe off their huge deficits. How then would they be better off in Pakistan?

Besides, Pakistan would have two very important borders to defend, one in the North-West and the other in the East Zone. In the modern world aggression seems to be the order of the day. Defence has, therefore, become the most important and pressing problem for all nations. Situated as Pakistan would be geographically, it would always stand exposed to outside aggression. How could its Defence, not to speak of the various other demands on its Exchequer, be managed with the paltry sum of Rs. 36 crores? The League has been discreetly silent on the matter. Even in the pre-war period, India spent about 150 crores annually on the Army. The sum of Rs. 36 crores would therefore be ridiculously inadequate for the defence of Pakistan alone, not to speak of the day-to-day cost of administration.

Is there any possibility of increasing the revenue of these Muslim-majority areas when Pakistan becomes a *fait accompli*? The answer is in the negative. The

main financial resources of India today are derived from her agricultural and industrial output. Let us analyse this aspect of the problem.

Dr Radhakamal Mukerjee, the reputed economist of India, has drawn a true picture of the economics of Pakistan. According to him, with the division of the country into Hindustan and Pakistan, Hindustan would have a virtual monopoly of coal (90 per cent) and iron (92 per cent), and considerable reserves of manganese, copper and bauxite. Pakistan, both North-western and Eastern, would have only a little low grade coal and iron ore and a little bauxite. All told, its mineral wealth would be only about 5 per cent of that of British India as a whole. The poverty of the Muslim masses, whose standard of living and average expectation of life are already lower than those of the Hindu masses, could only be relieved by rapid industrialization and for this Pakistan would desperately need the minerals of Hindustan. Assam coal, with its high sulphur content cannot be used for metallurgical purposes. In the Punjab the fuels are mostly lignites. Refractory materials are to be found mostly in Hindustan, except a few in Assam and Baluchistan. Most of India's cement production too is concentrated in Hindustan. So far as the production of rock phosphates, essential for manuring, is concerned, it is now confined to Singhbhum and Trichinopoly. But the deposits of sulphur in eastern Baluchistan might be utilized in the manufacture of ammonium sulphate for agriculture in Pakistan.

Dr Mukerjee sums up the entire industrial position of Pakistan in the following words :

'Pakistan cannot be an industrial State and thus lacks the wherewithal of development of a vigorous, democratic political community. No modern State can exist without

iron, coal and steel. As a matter of fact, the economic condition of the Muslim-dominated areas of the Punjab, Kashmir, the N.-W. F. P., Baluchistan and Sind and Eastern Bengal will remain largely pastoral and agricultural in the future due to lack of noteworthy mineral resources. Their welfare would largely lie in large-scale agricultural and pastoral enterprises depending upon the import of manufactured commodities from industrial Hindustan. Sind, Baluchistan and the N.-W. F. P. are some of the poorest regions of India requiring a vast amount of capital for development that Pakistan, an agricultural region, will not be able to provide.'

Even from the point of view of religion Pakistan could not claim any homogeneity. There would be Sikhs in the Muslim-majority areas, forming their own 'island', as Dr Mukerjee calls it; there would be 'islands' of Hindu population in Muslim-dominated areas, and 'islands' of Muslims in Hindu-dominated areas. This would be an impossible position; these 'islands' would prove a fruitful source of conflicts. If Pakistan is necessary in the interests of the minorities, then we should have to concede a 'Sikhistan' to the Sikhs, who according to 1941 Census, are 37,57,401, an 'Achyutstan' to sixty millions of Scheduled Caste people and a 'Dravidistan' to the large number of Dravidians in the South. Already these minorities are clamouring for sovereign States for themselves and if we accept the principle of Pakistan and concede it to the Muslims, there is no logical reason why we should refuse the same concession to these minorities who form a large part of the Indian population.

One of the most important factors that weigh against the granting of Muslim 'homelands' in the North-western and North-eastern zones of India, is the strong opposition to this scheme from an overwhelming number of non-

League Nationalist Muslims. They have faith neither in the League leadership nor in its policy of vivisection. But instead of wooing these groups to its creed, the League only asserts that it must have its 'birth-right'.

It will therefore be evident that Pakistan, which the Muslim Leaguers call their 'Charter of Independence', is unreal, even an 'untruth' in the words of Mahatma Gandhi, from every conceivable aspect. Prof. Berriedale Keith, in his *Constitutional History of India* characterized this state of affairs as a 'permanent source of danger to India'. And Mr Edward Thompson thinks likewise. He says: 'There is no surer way of plunging India into internal civil war.'

Will the protagonists of Pakistan ignore all these weighty considerations in the dust and storm of controversy and still clamour for what is universally considered a positive evil?

CHAPTER XVII

THE DOCTRINE OF THE SWORD

Absolute non-resistance or absolute-violence, says Herbert Spencer, hurts both altruism and egoism. Spencer's view seems to portray the outlook and political ideology of the Hindu Mahasabha, third in importance among the Indian political parties. A militant body itself, the Mahasabha exhorts all its members and adherents to develop a spirit of resistance and militarism. Today, Hindu militarization is one of the foremost items in the programme of the Hindu Mahasabha. 'Militarise Hindudom'—this is its sheet-anchor. To the Mahasabha the means employed for achieving this end or, for attaining political independence are of little consequence. Whether it is by violent and revolutionary methods, or through pure and absolute non-violence, the end must be achieved at any cost. For the average Hindu Mahasabhaite, Aldous Huxley's philosophy that the end cannot justify the means, 'for the simple and obvious reason that the means employed determine the nature of the ends produced', has no meaning. For the Gandhian philosophy of absolute non-violence, of non-violent resistance even to aggression, he has nothing but scorn. The Mahasabha considers that resistance to aggression in all possible and practicable ways is not only justifiable, but imperative. According to Mr V. D. Savarkar, its President for seven successive sessions and the greatest among its leaders, perfect non-violence or non-resistance even to aggression is 'absolutely immoral' and he holds that it is bound to spell destruction to all human progress

because it would sacrifice the innocent to spare the guilty, exterminate the nobler types of humanity, leaving only the wicked to multiply. The Hindu Mahasabha has never believed in such a 'queer and immoral' creed.

The Mahasabha, like the Indian National Congress, stands for complete independence for India. And when war broke out, this organization, like the Congress, strongly disputed the claims of the British and of other belligerent nations that they had been actuated solely by moral and altruistic considerations. This tall claim, it considered, would be nothing but a propagandist stunt so long as the British continued to hold India in bondage. But, unlike the Congress, the Mahasabha thought that in spite of the pretensions of the British Government, there was ample room for whole-hearted co-operation between India and England. India had been kept unarmed and emasculated by her rulers mainly out of fear and distrust. A country unarmed and unprepared to defend itself from military aggression cannot retain its freedom even for a single day. Britain had to revise her policy under pressure of the exigencies of war, and the army was thrown open to every Indian. The Hindu Mahasabha held the view that it would be suicidal for the Hindus to allow this opportunity for militarization to slip by. It exhorted all Hindu Sabhaites and Hindu Sanghatanists throughout the country to intensify their efforts, and to utilize this opportunity to press on the movement for militarizing the Hindu race and secure for it training in modern military science.

The Mahasabha was not anxious for co-operation in the war effort for its own sake, but it believed that the situation offered certain opportunities that could be exploited to its own advantage. The Mahasabha President said:

'There is no question of co-operating or non-co-operating with the British Government in their war effort. The only question before you is to find out how best you can make this inevitable co-operation with the British as profitable as possible to our own country in the circumstances today.'

It was therefore the part of realism, the Mahasabha argued, that it should render what it called 'responsive co-operation' to the British Government, in so far as the defence of India during the war was concerned. If the Hindu Sabhaites utilized this opportunity to the largest measure possible by extending co-operation to the British Government in a responsive spirit in so far as recruitment to the armed forces was concerned, they would be doing a double service to Hinduism. First, they would be able to defend their own hearths and homes, if they were actually attacked by allied forces from outside or faced by internal anti-Hindu anarchy ; secondly, in addition to this immediate benefit, they would be able so to press forward with the Hindu militarization movement as to secure for Hindus permanently a dominant position in the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force. Exhorting young able-bodied Hindus, Mr Savarkar said:

'Let the Hindus come forward now and enter the Army, the Navy, the Air Forces, the Ordnance and other war-crafts factories in their thousands and millions. Let them cross the seas to give fight and to pass through the baptism of fire in all the world theatres of war, learn to use the latest weapons the world knows of and measure their swords with the bravest races of the world today.'

The response to this stirring appeal was immediate and handsome. Large numbers of Hindu youth recruited themselves in the fighting forces and Hindu girls joined the Auxiliary services, and today the Hindus, including

Sikhs, form nearly three-fourths of the total strength of the different defence units of India, whereas when war broke out, they were less than one-third. And they did cross swords with the bravest soldiers of the world, coming out with flying colours and establishing the fair name of India in the eyes of the world by their incomparable heroism. Out of the total number of Victoria Cross awards, the highest military honour for individual valour, over two dozens have gone to Hindus.

The militarization of the Hindus owes its origin and development to Mr Savarkar and Dr B. S. Moonje, the two militant stalwarts of the Mahasabha who believe in the doctrine of the sword. Mr Savarkar was, in his earlier days, a turbulent revolutionary. He once jumped overboard from an English ship and swam the English Channel to the French shore in order to evade trial at British hands. True, an extradition order sent him back to Britain, and he was later sentenced to fourteen years in the Andamans. But this grim ordeal did not kill his revolutionary ardour and when he came out in 1937, one of the first and foremost tasks he undertook was the revival of the military spirit among Hindus. That was the Gandhian era. A quarter of a century's preaching of and propaganda for the cult of non-violence had just begun to show results and India was gradually veering round to Gandhiji's creed.

It was at this moment that the militant Savarkar burst upon the Indian political scene and at once pitted himself against the Gandhian gospel. In everything that he did, in every public speech, in every public statement, Mr Savarkar stressed the necessity of once again militarizing the manhood of the Hindu nation. To him the martial instincts and military efficiency of a nation constituted the very breath of its life. He demanded compulsory

military training in India and waged a tearing campaign against the deliberate policy of the authorities which led to the emasculation of the Hindus. The Hindu Public, accustomed only to the moral teachings of the Gandhian cult of absolute non-violence, was at first stupefied. But, later on a large number of them welcomed it and embraced it in all earnestness. The result was that when two years later the war touched Indian soil, hundreds and thousands of Hindu youth plunged headlong into the struggle and by their heroic deeds in the various war theatres won for themselves the highest military distinctions.

The Hindu Sanghatanists today are well-organized and well-disciplined, thanks to the great stress the Mahasabha laid on militarization. It was primarily the growing strength of the Muslim League and its ever-increasing demands that contributed to the present structure of the Mahasabha, but the policy of appeasement followed by the Congress at times also helped to popularize the Sabha. Let us analyse this point and see the relation between the Hindu Mahasabha, whose membership consists exclusively of Hindus, and the Congress, which has a majority of Hindus as its members.

The Mahasabha is, as an organization, thoroughly anti-Congress. It had been for a long period pro-Congress but under the leadership of Mr Savarkar it is gradually moving into the opposition camp and its criticism of the Congress and its policies are very bitter. In this respect its policy is similar to that of the Muslim League. Both the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League diametrically opposed to each other in their views as they are, fight as bitterly against the Congress as they fight each other.

Why is it so ? Why cannot the Mahasabha join hands with the Congress in the common cause of Indian in-

dependence ? The Congress policy of appeasement, as has already been stated, is responsible for this sharp cleavage between these two organizations. The British rulers of India first sowed the seed of communal discord by introducing separate and communal electorates for the Muslims in 1909. Ramsay Macdonald's Communal Award accentuated it further in 1932. The Award sacrificed Hindu interests to those of the Muslims. It was therefore expected that the Congress, whose leadership was dominantly Hindu, which was run on Hindu money and Hindu sacrifices, and which claimed to safeguard the interests of all communities equally, would start a country-wide agitation against this vicious project. But, unfortunately, at its Lucknow session, it adopted a resolution 'neither accepting nor rejecting' the scheme which rudely shocked the Hindu world. The Hindus felt that this neutrality on the part of the Congress was prompted by its anxiety to woo the Muslims of India and bring them in large numbers into its fold, even at the sacrifice of certain principles, and regardless of Hindu interests. That was the first time the Mahasabha realized that it must strengthen its own forces and cease relying on the Congress to safeguard Hindu interests though the majority of Congressmen were Hindus and though Mr Jinnah himself characterized it as a Hindu body. Said Mr Savarkar in his presidential address at the Nagpur session of the Mahasabha in 1938:

'We are out to chastize its anti-Hindu policy, to cure it of the intolerable hypocrisy which is all the more harmful for its strutting about under the mask of truth, truth absolute and nothing but truth, with its lathi charges and English bayonets going merrily hand in hand with non-violence, non-violence absolute and nothing but non-violence in thought, word and deed!'

Of all the Hindu Mahasabhaites, Mr Savarkar appears to be the most vehement critic of the Congress. Every utterance of his belches fire against the Congress. His words, his deeds and possibly his thought also breathe an anti-Congress spirit. He says:

'The Congress draws all its supplies, men, money and votes, from the Hindus. Congressmen stand on Hindu shoulders as Hindu candidates and as soon as they raise themselves to those high places, they kick the Hindus back, disown the Hindus, call Hindu organizations communal, and therefore reprehensibly betray Hindu interests at every turn, but keep dancing attendance on the Muslim League.... They call themselves Indian nationalists! But every step they take is communal. They have guaranteed special protection to minorities, Moslems, Christians, Europeans, etc. Is that Indian nationalism?'

Mr Savarkar therefore suggests the following ways of chastizing what he calls the pseudo-nationalist fad of the Congress: (1) Boycott the Congress; (2) don't vote for the Congress; and (3) vote only for a confirmed and tested Hindu nationalist. Let no Hindu Sanghatanist pay a single farthing in support of, or register a single vote for a Congress candidate.

Another factor responsible for alienating the Mahasabha from the Congress was the Khilafat movement and Gandhiji's identification with it on behalf of the Congress. Then there were the offers of blank cheques, the fifty-fifty-ratio, to which the Congress agreed and which ushered in the parity formula adopted in the Wavell Plan. But the last straw was the demand for a complete division of India, the substance of which also Mahatma Gandhi conceded, though he confessed that he himself had no faith in it and saw only ruin in such vivisection.

The Mahasabha is the stoutest of all opponents of the Pakistan scheme, and threatens that the protagonists of Pakistan would have to walk over the dead bodies of millions of Hindus before they could achieve a division of India.

The Mahasabha's indictment of the 'anti-Hindu' policy of the Congress cannot be lightly brushed aside as frivolous. Congress policy may not strictly be called 'anti-Hindu', but it *is* definitely pro-Muslim. It has been the constant anxiety of the Congress to woo the Muslims and it has made tremendous sacrifices, sometimes seemingly unreasonable and indefensible, in pursuing that policy. The motives behind this policy are laudable inasmuch as the Congress is a nationalist body, striving first and foremost for the freedom of the country, for which it considers no sacrifice too great, especially in winning over the Muslims to its side. But the Mahasabha maintains that there is justification for its complaint that Hindu interests are not safe in the hands of the Congress. This apprehension is based on instances like the ban imposed by Mr Rajagopalachari's Congress Government on the activities of the Hindu Mahasabha against the anti-Hindu measures of the Nizam's Government, which the Madras Premier styled our 'Sister State', and also the prohibition by Pandit Govind Vallabh Pant, the Congress Premier of the United Provinces, of the Hindus in several localities from playing music even in their houses throughout Mohurrum Week. The Mahasabha claims that the policy of the Congress has reduced the Hindus of India to the position of political orphans in their own Motherland. Rightly or wrongly the Hindus *are* apprehensive, and as long as the Congress pursues a policy of appeasement the militant Mahasabha will ceaselessly fight it tooth and nail. And so Mr Savarkar declares

emphatically :

'So long as the Congress persists in hugging to the perverse conception of "Nationalism" which practically amounts to the betrayal of the Hindu cause, there cannot and should not be any co-operation between the Hindu Mahasabha and the Congress. On the contrary, it will be the bounden duty of every Hindu who does not want to sell his birth-right for a mess of pottage to undermine the Congress and free Hindudom in general and the Hindu electorate in particular from the grip of the so-called Indian National Congress.'

CHAPTER XVIII

SUPER-INTERNATIONALISM

In the modern world where armed conflicts among nations caused by their lust for power have brought about destruction on a colossal scale, the desire to foster an international outlook and live in peace and amity with other nations is natural and praiseworthy. History tells us that conflicts arose only when national interests were thought to be at stake. When Germany razed Belgium to the ground in the first World War or when Hitler invaded Poland in 1939, the same idea, whether it was right or wrong, motivated their aggression. But the subordination of national interests to internationalism is rare, and nowhere in the world's history do we come across a people sacrificing their own national interest in the interest of international well-being.

The Communists of India, however, provide the exception. When the second World War broke out in September, 1939, following the Hitler-Stalin Pact, Indian Communists, like the Indian National Congress, declared it to be an imperialist war and were loud in denouncing Anglo-French-American imperialism as the main obstacle in the way of human progress. But when about two years later Germany invaded Russia, they suddenly changed their front and declared that the war had become a 'People's War'. To them the national interests of India did not matter. Russia was their Valhalla and they were only worried about the fate of their compatriots in Soviet Russia. And in their burning enthusiasm to help Russia, they even opposed the Indian National Congress.

When on August 8, 1942, the Congress declared its intention to launch a national movement on the widest possible scale for achieving India's independence, the Indian Communists stood aside lest such a movement should directly or indirectly jeopardize the interest of Russia! They wholeheartedly agreed with the main part of the resolution, its opposition to all forms of Fascism, its sympathy for the cause of the United Nations, the unqualified pledge underlined in it to organize both armed and non-violent resistance to the Jap aggressors and the demand for a National Government. But they objected to the operative clause in the resolution which sanctioned a struggle. They firmly believed that the lead given by the Congress was tantamount to committing 'political suicide'. They did everything possible therefore before the All India Congress Committee met to persuade the Congress to abstain from such a policy in the midst of a war. The Communists addressed an open letter to the Congress Working Committee on the eve of the Bombay session of the A. I. C. C. in which they criticized the Congress move in no uncertain terms. The letter said: 'The sort of struggle Gandhiji is visualizing and in which the rest of you have acquiesced is not a plan of struggle, but a gamble. It is not fighting for freedom, but escaping into jails. It is not leading the people, but forsaking them. It does not liquidate the imperialist bureaucracy, but only helps those living under it now to be passed on as chattels to its successors, the Jap Fascists. Such a "struggle" will not get us freedom, but Fascism.'

The Communists thought that the battle of Indian freedom had to be fought within a broader, world-wide framework, alongside the free peoples of the world. India was no doubt held in bondage by an imperialist power and there could be no two opinions on the question of

fighting this power ; but, the Communists said, today a new and worse enslaver was poised on her threshold, and she could not be blind to this new danger.

This propaganda against Congress policy was perfectly legitimate until the A. I. C. C. met. But when ultimately the A. I. C. C. passed the resolution by an overwhelming majority, it was incumbent upon the Communists to follow the Congress mandate. But the Communists would not acquiesce in it, but continued opposing the August resolution. They did not stop at that. They exhorted the people to keep aloof from the Congress move. On the positive side, the Communists kept harping upon the necessity for national unity. Their facile propaganda was centred on the slogans: 'Against the Imperialist bureaucracy, national unity for a National Government'; 'Against the Fascist Invaders, national unity for national resistance' ; 'Prepare the country to fight the Fascist invaders to the death. That will be fighting for freedom because such is the only path to our freedom.' In effect, all this meant that the Congress should appease the League and its intransigent leader.

The Indian Communists, however, did not show how this much-desired national unity could be achieved while the British bureaucracy played one party against another. The Communists simply said: 'Where there is a will there is a way.' The will was there, as the Congress publicly demonstrated more than once by knocking at the bolted door at Mount Pleasant Road. But was there a way ? Merely shouting pious platitudes does not bring one anywhere near the goal. Did our Communist friends make any effective contribution towards the consummation of the national unity of their slogans ?

The Communist Party is the youngest among the Indian political parties. Although the reverberations of

the October Revolution in Russia were felt in this land, it took another decade for Communism to take root in the Indian soil. It was only when Communism wholeheartedly identified itself with the working class movement in India that it could consolidate its position and make any headway. But it must be said to its credit that within a short period, the Communist Party of India had attained for itself a conspicuous place in Indian political life. The strict discipline which the Party imposed on its members, the selfless missionary zeal with which they worked, the outstanding organizing ability of some of its hard-working front-rank leaders, the influx of young intellectuals who were drawn to the Party by its doctrinaire revolutionary philosophy had made the Party a definite force in the country and it formed an important limb of the National Congress. It was the Congress that sowed the early seeds of patriotism in the hearts of the Communists who acknowledged this with deep gratitude. 'To us,' they said, 'the Congress is our parent organisation, its leaders our political fathers, its followers our brothers-in-arms.'

But the sudden *volte face* of the Communist Party on the eve of a national movement in August 1942, prompted by its desire to help Soviet Russia even at the sacrifice of India's interests had created suspicion and distrust about the *bona fides* of the party in the minds of a large section of Congressmen. Grave charges were levelled against the Indian Communists in respect of their activities during the war, and a move is already afoot for the elimination of the Indian Reds from the Congress.* Some of these charges were, of course, flimsy and were most

* The Communists have now foresworn their allegiance to the Congress and have decided to walk out of the organization.

emphatically repudiated by the Communists, but there are others which cannot be brushed aside.

The Communists called the titanic struggle just ended a 'People's War'. But was it really so? What was the Communist explanation? They decided the character of the war on the basis of an 'objective' analysis of the motives of the participants and the basic issues at stake. This war, they said, had split the world into two camps; on the one side were the Fascist aggressors who were aiming at the domination of the world; on the other side were, according to the Communists the 'freedom-loving peoples of the world'. In this camp stood the great U. S. S. R., 'where alone real freedom and full democracy prevails, where alone the people are united as they nowhere else are, where there is a people's army the like of which has never been raised before, where there is a people's State whose strength has come as a revelation to all other peoples and Governments.' If the Fascist side had won, it would have meant slavery for every country of the world and the end of freedom in the world. The victory of the Allies, the Communists thought, would mean a victory for the cause of freedom itself.

'If the patriotic leaders of the Colonial people oppose this war, they directly aid the Fascist enslavement of their own country and help the Fascist imperialists conquer the rest of the world with the added strength of their resources and sign the death warrant of their own nation. If the patriotic leaders of the Colonial people remain neutral, they indirectly aid the Fascist aggressor by condemning their own people to a course of passivity, leaving the resources of their country in the hands of an alien Government, which cannot but be incompetent and soulless.' (Gandhi-Joshi Correspondence, pp. 5-6).

The Communists did not explain how Russia's alli-

ance with Britain and America, which was dictated by exigency rather than unity of ideals, could convert what they themselves had claimed to be an imperialist war into a people's war. Their only argument seemed to be that whatever Russia did was right, and once the Soviet Union was attacked by the Nazis they threw themselves on the side of Russia with no respect for consistency nor a thought for conditions in India. In considering any policy, national or international, political or economic, Russia, like King Charles' head, must always needs crop up. They called it a people's war because 'Germany's attack was directed against the anti-imperialist friend of the oppressed peoples of the East ; it was an attack on a new civilization, it was an attack on one-sixth of the earth's surface, which alone was really free and prosperous, which embodied the best dreams and all the hopes of the best of mankind, and behind which stood not only the organized world-wide Communist movement, but all progressive, freedom-loving peoples. It was an attack on the one People's Government, on the one free union of nations the like of which the world has not yet known, which represents the interests of its own peoples and of all the peoples of the world. It was an attack on the Red Flag planted on the only victorious fortress of World Revolution that the workers, toilers and enslaved nations of all lands possess.' (P. C. Joshi in *Peace Front to People's War*, p. 348.)

This is at best a brilliant piece of Russian propaganda against Hitlerite Germany to enlist moral and material co-operation from the people of the world, but it does not conclusively prove that the war had become a 'people's war' through the entry of Russia into the fray. Did not Great Britain claim to possess a people's Government, just as good as the Soviet Government and

probably more democratic? Did not the Americans consider themselves just as much a freedom-loving and progressive people as the Russians? Was not China's fight against the unprovoked aggression of Japan a 'people's war'? Where were the Communists and their slogans then?

A considerable section of the rank and file of the Congress maintain that after August 1942, there was no common ground between Indian nationalism and communism. For them the very fact that the Communists looked upon the war as a 'people's war' is conclusive proof of the incompatibility of their views. The Communists' reply to this is vehement. They are proud of their Communism, which inspired them to fight for what they call the 'greatest cause of mankind—a world Socialist brotherhood of free and equal peoples'.

Equal peoples indeed! One would feel tempted to ask our Communist friends: Has the war in which the Communists participated so enthusiastically made India free or equal with other participants, even after the termination of the war in the East?

Congressmen seem to be almost unanimous in their opinion that the Communists stabbed the Congress in the back by not carrying out its August resolution. This was the most serious of all the charges made against the Communists, and it amounted to a breach of party discipline. There might be differences of opinion among various groups inside a party on any particular issue, and certainly these differences might be emphatically exposed when the issue is still on the anvil, with the idea of bringing round the majority party to the views of the dissenters. This is constitutionally admissible. But once a decision, right or wrong, has been taken it is the duty of all elements of the party, as long as they continue to

owe allegiance to the party, faithfully to carry out the mandate. But the Communists insisted on sticking to the Congress and at the same time kept on violating the party mandate by voicing their opposition to it openly on the platform and in the press. When the Congress leaders courted imprisonment in their unflinching determination to achieve India's freedom, the Communists remained outside to oppose the Congress movement. This was certainly a serious violation of party discipline and it was hardly surprising that it was characterized as a 'stab in the back.' The best that the Communists could have done was to follow the example set by Mr Rajagopalachari, to resign from the Congress after the adoption of the August resolution, and thus secure freedom publicly to preach and propagate their cause according to their own lights. But this they refused to do—they remained within the Congress, only to weaken it.

This anti-Congress and pro-war bias of the Indian Communists led to another accusation—that they were actuated by some ulterior motive. It was alleged that they had no principles save that of keeping their party alive and beating their opponents with any stick that came in handy. (Gandhi-Joshi Correspondence)

Yet another charge against them was that they pursued the policy of undermining Congress activities, under instructions from the leaders of the Third International. A fourth charge related to the Communist Party's active help to the authorities in arresting national leaders and organizers of labour strikes during the August movement. It was stated that they had adopted the policy of infiltrating into the Congress organization with hostile intent. These complaints reached Mahatma Gandhi, who after his release on May 6, 1944, felt the need for investigating their veracity. The Communists, of course, repudiat-

ed them, characterizing them as flimsy, based on ignorance of the Communist doctrine and a deliberate campaign of calumny and blackmailing against the party by interested Congress Socialists and the members of the Forward Bloc founded by Subhas Chandra Bose. In his letter dated June 14, 1944, to Gandhiji, who had drawn his attention to these allegations, Mr Joshi, the leader of the Communist Party said :

'From the time of Marx himself no ideology has been more misrepresented than ours. No people's leaders have ever been slandered and for so long as Lenin and Stalin, and yet one-sixth of the world, that is, the U.S. S.R., and the growing Communist Parties in every country of the world are living monuments to their work.'

Replying to the charge of the Congress Socialists that Indian Communism had been basking under the sunshine of Government favour and making capital out of the enforced absence of Congressmen from the political field, Mr Joshi said : ' Would the Government pay a party which has been consistently campaigning for your and other Congress leaders' release, which has been fighting the slander that the Congress is pro-Jap, which has been popularizing the anti-Fascist stand of the Congress, which has been demanding a settlement on the basis of a National Government ?'

This argument is seemingly convincing, especially when one recalls that until Russia's entry into the war, the Indian Communists were victims of Government persecution, the Party was declared an illegal organization, all its literature was proscribed, all its properties were forfeited to Government and its leaders outlawed. But then, the Congress Socialists contend that there was a secret Maxwell-Joshi pact under whose screen Communists sabotaged the Congress effort, that the Govern-

ment persecution was mere camouflage to lend the party a reputation for her innocence! No proof, however, has been adduced of the insistence of this pact.

But one thing is definite. Whatever the truth about the various other allegations made against Communist activity during the war, the Party can never escape the grave charge of indiscipline in refusing to line up with the Congress in August, 1942. This charge has not been, and cannot be, refuted; the consequences of this 'revolt' are dangerous and far-reaching. If the present move to eject the Communists from the Congress camp is endorsed and it is carried out, the Congress will be weakened considerably. If the charge is ignored, it might encourage further breach of discipline. What then is the duty of the Congress High Command? The time has come for our great national organization to evaluate the role of the various groups in the Congress during the August movement and to make its decision on this complicated but important issue. India is still in bondage; the Congress has yet to launch the final battle for the achievement of Swaraj; and in this task it needs must mobilize all nationalist forces in the country to present a united front. Is this the time for indulging in petty internal squabbles? Whatever might have happened in the past, does it not behove the Congress, in the larger interests of the cause of independence to adopt the policy of 'forgive and forget'? The Congress is the greatest national institution in the country; it has grown to its present stature by uniting within its ranks various patriotic elements and by dedicating itself to the service of the people. The Communist Party is a well-organized, well-disciplined body, to which the cream of our youth and the patriotic intelligentsia, both Hindu and Muslim, are being drawn in increasing numbers. The elimination there-

fore of this new and rising force of 25,000 strong from the Congress could not only weaken our own hands and strengthen our opponents' but it would retard our progress towards the ultimate goal. India needs every one of her children. Why not rope in the Communists too, notwithstanding their past lapses? Even Mr Winston Churchill, the inveterate opponent of Soviet Socialism, who once labelled Stalin 'that blood-stained man', was forced by circumstances to embrace the supreme Soviet leader as friend and ally. British die-hards, despite their bitter hostility to the Labour Party consented, in the face of a national crisis to form a coalition National Government. Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek reputed to be a confirmed enemy of Communism had to woo the Chinese Reds in the hour of the country's trial. Is it then too much to expect of the Indian National Congress to patch up its own internal differences and present a strong united front for the attainment of our long-cherished goal of freedom? After all, Communism sprang from the Indian national movement itself. The founders of the party were ardent workers during the 1919-20 movement. They belonged either to the Congress or the Khilafat movement or to the earlier terrorist groups. And the Communists themselves seem to be eager to remain in the Congress and join hands with it in its struggle for national liberation. Said Mr Joshi in this connection: 'Ask of us anything and we will try our best to set your doubts at rest. When we differ, we must discuss over and over again for the simple reason that we cannot afford to fall apart.'

Besides, a multiplicity of parties with divergent political ideologies can only disrupt our national unity and strength. Already there are too many parties with opposite view-points in this country; there is fratricidal

strife. The task on which the Congress must at this critical juncture in the history of India concentrate is to sink all differences and march forward in the final battle for freeing India from her centuries-old bondage.

CHAPTER XIX

THE 'DULL BRIGADE'

Prof. Harold Laski has said that it was the duty of the citizen to exhaust the means at his disposal in the constitution of the State before resorting to revolution. The Indian Liberals, like Laski are believers in constitutionalism. To them, revolution is taboo. They still believe in the Ps of political action : prayer, petition and protest.

But what if the technique of constitutionalism proves ineffective? For the Indian National Congress, the only course left open would be, as I have already stated in the foregoing chapters, direct action ; the Hindu Mahasabha, in similar circumstances might be content with sabre-rattling or vociferous shouting ; the Musiim League as has been proved by past history, would prefer the policy of sitting on the fence. As for the Indian Liberals, they would call a meeting, criticize, pass innocuous resolutions and then disperse unceremoniously. It is no wonder then, that a fire-brand like Jawaharlal Nehru should call these eminent nonentities the 'Dull Brigade', a vague, amorphous body of people, who seem to yearn for occasional political glory. Their creed 'to co-operate when we can, to criticize when we cannot' does not appeal to the Indian masses of today, who know Liberal policy is based on a philosophy of inaction. While every other political party in India is forging ahead with its constructive programme, trying to keep pace with the changing world and opposing the Government of the land, if necessary, our Liberals are ploughing a lonely furrow

and hope for the best, depending as they do on the outworn methods of constitutional agitation. A body of moderates—in their tone and temper, in their writings and conversation and in their political outlook—these Liberals cannot conceive of non-co-operation at any time and in any circumstances.

This unattractive pusillanimous policy was demonstrated in its worst colours in the Liberal's attitude towards World War II. The Liberal Federation of India was possibly the only political organization in India which believed that Great Britain fought this war against Germany and Italy in the cause of real democracy and freedom. The Indian Communists, we have seen, felt likewise, but this 'wisdom' dawned upon them only when the U. S. S. R. was thrust into the Allied camp, after the unexpected Nazi invasion. But the Indian Liberals thought from the very beginning that this was a war for democracy. Strangely enough it did not strike the Liberals, amongst whom are some of the most brilliant intellects, that British protestations that they were fighting for preservation of democracy and freedom in Europe were not in any way borne out by their policy in Asia and in other parts of the world under Allied domination.

The Liberal Federation again was the only political body in India which advocated wholehearted co-operation on the part of Indians with His Majesty's Government without any condition or reservation. The only thing it wanted the British Government to do was to create psychological conditions here in order to evoke ready co-operation from four hundred million Indians. The anxiety of the Liberals to co-operate in the war effort is evident in the speech of Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, a former President of the Liberal Federation, who moved the official resolution of the Party on the war at the Liberal

Conference held at Calcutta in 1940. Said the veteran leader : 'We should ask the country to give its whole-hearted support to Britain in the prosecution of the war. In doing that we are not asking the country to do so for obliging Britain, but to oblige ourselves, for the safety of our hearths and homes ; because it is very obvious to any thinking person that our fortunes are bound up, for the moment, with the fortunes of England. If England goes down in this war, there is no question that India will lose her independence, even the present liberty that she enjoys, and all her dreams of democratic self-government will certainly come to an end. Therefore, sheer self-interest demands that India should put her best efforts in order to support England to carry this war to a successful conclusion.'

The attachment of the Indian Liberals to the British Commonwealth of Nations was equally strong. They believed that it was the sure shield of England and her allies against all aggression. This point was brought out by Mr P. N. Sapru, the Federation President, in 1938. Said he in his address at the Bombay session of the Federation on the eve of the war : 'In a world full of menace to the democratic status, we have in the British Commonwealth of Nations an organization which can provide the base for a system of collective security. In a world full of menace to the Asiatic and African races, it would give to India a sense of security that an entirely independent existence cannot.'

The Indian Liberals call themselves the 'legitimate successors of the Indian National Congress'. Most of the older members of the Liberal Party belonged at one time to the Congress, and they remained in it as long as it pursued the policy of what Walter Bagehot calls 'animated moderation'. But differences arose when with the

advent of Mahatma Gandhi on the Indian political scene, the Congress abandoned the sterile habit of petitioning and protesting and adopted an avowedly revolutionary policy. Gandhiji returned to India from South Africa in 1915. The victorious battle which he had waged with General Smuts in South Africa had revealed to him the possibilities of Satyagraha and he was not slow to apply the lessons to India where conditions were in no way better; there the battle was between Indians and General Smuts; here it was to be between Indians and an alien Imperialism which had been keeping them down for nearly two centuries.

Gandhiji's weapons were novel and seemed too revolutionary to some moderate elements in the Congress. It was not possible for them to go the whole hog with Gandhiji's radical programme, and when the Congress ultimately decided to non-co-operate with Government in the operation of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms they parted company. Sir C. Y. Chintamani, one of the shining lights of the party described the parting of the ways thus: 'The Liberals had never desired to remain a separate organization, but the position was forced upon them by the fact that the Congress was shunted off its marked track by the policy and programme of non-co-operation which Mr Gandhi had made it adopt as its way to Swaraj.'

That was in 1918. Since then Indian Liberals do not appear to have changed a whit, although the world around them has undergone a revolutionary transformation. Their policy is static in a dynamic world. Pandit Nehru would call them the Hamlets of Indian politics, 'sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought', ever doubting, hesitating and irresolute.

The Liberals have no mass support. And they have

no plan, either to preach or propagate among the masses what they are convinced is 'the only sound policy' in the circumstances obtaining in the country. This unusual lack of enthusiasm for propaganda is possibly due to the awareness in their sub-conscious minds that their policy, however 'sound' it may appear to them, would hardly appeal to the masses. Foreign domination and exploitation for 200 years have led the millions of our countrymen to sink deeper in the quicksands of poverty and they naturally are drawn to such political organizations as promise them their freedom ; and to shake off their burden, they are prepared to take bold steps. Half-hearted measures, palliatives for the hour, leave them cold. If the masses have responded to the call of the Congress to undergo privation, to court imprisonment and to face bullets—things which terrify the Liberals—it is because they know that only a revolution can bring the fruits of revolution, which in their case is relief from iniquitous land levies, crushing debts, grinding poverty, perpetual hunger and economic insecurity. But the Liberal programme fights shy of any such bold and constructive work. The Liberals, however, claim that theirs is an appeal to reason. Here, for instance, is what a leading Liberal leader Dr R. P. Paranjpye, has to say for the lack of mass support for his party :

'We are painfully conscious that our policy does not make the same appeal to the common man as some other policies do. While we admit that we Liberals do not put the same energy into our political propaganda, and should take a lesson in this respect from other parties, we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that middle parties that can only appeal to reason, commonsense and experience are always apt to take a subordinate place in times of storm and stress.

The suggestion for the solution of the constitutional deadlock in India made by the Liberal constitutionalists is equally mild. They would suggest that during the war a Round Table Conference should be convened for joint consultations amongst the leaders of the Congress, the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha and other important political parties and interests and co-operation in the evolution of plans for forming national composite Governments at the Centre and in the provinces. They are convinced that composite national Governments 'will be of great help in clearing misunderstandings between the various parties and between them and Government, in increasing mutual confidence and in bringing about conditions which will facilitate the inauguration of a satisfactory and workable constitution for India when peace has been restored.'

To the Government the Liberal Party would again 'appeal' to take early steps to satisfy the aspirations of the people and remind them of their obligation to the people of India.

It is, however, strange that these brilliant intellectuals are oblivious to the vicious circle in which Indian politics is moving in its relation to the Government. The Powers that-be proclaim that all misunderstandings between one community and another should be removed first as a condition precedent to the constitution of a national government. The Congress claims that communal misunderstanding cannot be removed so long as the third party is there. The contention of the Liberals is that all misunderstandings would disappear the moment there is a National Government. The August Resolution is anathema to the moderates inasmuch as it postulated direct action ; it is according to the Liberals, 'wrong, ill-conceived and extremely unfortunate.' In fact, from its

very inception the Liberal Federation has dissociated itself from such movements and asked other organizations to follow suit. Similarly, they appealed to the Congress to leave its 'barren track' of direct action and follow the golden path of constitutional agitation only.

The attitude of the Federation towards Pakistan, however, is consistent and definite. There is no political body in India excepting, of course, the Hindu Mahasabha, which is as strongly opposed to the idea of dividing India into Pakistan and Hindustan on a communal basis as the Liberal Federation. Such a division, in the opinion of the Federation, is 'anti-national, inimical to the unity and cohesion of India and entails the danger of disintegrating national unity, resulting in complete disruption of the nation.'

The world is rapidly changing, and with it India too. It is high time that our Liberals overhauled their out-of-date political policy and joined hands with all progressive elements in the country. What a magnificent addition of strength it would be for the soldiers of India's liberation, if the fertile brains of the Indian Liberals could be combined with the organizational strength of the Indian National Congress in the battle for freedom!

CHAPTER XX

THE PAWNS

George Bernard Shaw once wrote that 'the only real tragedy in life is being used by personally-minded men for purposes which you know to be base. All the rest is at the worst mere misfortune and mortality : this alone is misery, slavery, hell on earth.'

This pithy remark of shaw reminds us of the position of the Indian Princes. The existence of a separate block in India, covering about a third of the total area under semi-feudal conditions is indeed the most tragic factor in the political life of India today. But the poignancy of the tragedy was more acutely felt during the war when the Princes allowed themselves to be mercilessly exploited by the Paramount Power in men, money and materials, even at the sacrifice of their subjects' welfare. As soon as the war broke out, almost all the Princes, with Bikaner leading them as usual, rushed to the side of the Allies. In some cases the poor people of the States were subjected to coercion to contribute money for war purposes, though they were always on the verge of abject poverty.

The history of Indian States is an interesting one. Many of the 562 States came into being when the Moghul Empire fell to pieces ; local Chieftains became independent of central control and established themselves as sovereign rulers of territories which happened to be under their control. After the great rebellion of 1857, the British found it in their interest to encourage these rulers and establish them as bulwarks of reaction. Treaties were

entered into, which while giving the rulers a shadow of autonomy, left the shaping of their destiny in British hands. While it suited Britain, the Government interfered with the affairs of the State ; but the 'sacredness' of their treaties with the Princes was always paraded before the people when there was popular clamour against a particular ruler. The Princes have taken advantage of such a situation. While unhesitatingly obeying the mandates of the powers-that-be, they exploit their people with impunity. Many States are still medieval in their constitutions and governments.

The Indian Princes were first in condemning Hitler for attacking the peoples of Europe, and were loud in their protestations of sympathy for the free peoples of Europe who were being over-run by the Fascists ; yet in their own States they upheld and perpetuated autocracy of the worst type. The States' subjects enjoy no civil liberties, nor is there any freedom for the Press. Happenings inside the jails of some of the petty States stand comparison with the horrors of Nazi concentration camps. In most of the States, outsiders, who are not 'safe' in the opinion of their rulers are not allowed to enter, lest their prying eyes should reveal the rottenness of their rule.

Two stories that have trickled out of the States throw a lurid light on the conditions which govern their administrations.

In one of the tiny States in Rajputana, the Government recently revived an order, which apparently was passed a hundred years ago. This order dictates that no citizen or shopkeeper in the State shall be allowed to use cushions or pillows in his verandah, shop, or at a place in his house which can be seen by people passing by in the streets. The order further requires that tailors and barbers in the State shall not use chairs in their

shops! Whether this strange order is meant to prevent the State subjects from looking more dignified than the Ruler of the State or whether it is issued because the Ruler does not think that any of his subjects is worthy enough to occupy a chair is not clear from the order ; but we have it on good authority that all the State tailors and members of the barber fraternity had to submit to this whim of the ruler ; the tailors took to hand-sewing machines and the clientele of the barbers resigned themselves to the ordeal of having their hair cut while sitting on the bare ground.

In Rajputana the law permits the creditor to chain his debtor and march him along the public streets to humiliate him for default, a treatment which in civilized countries is not accorded even to felons. When we come to think of it, some of the happenings in the Indian States make us doubt whether we are really living in the twentieth century and in a country which is being ruled by a nation that claims to be civilized.

Who is really responsible for this maladministration in the Indian States ? Certainly the Paramount Power, under whose aegis the Princes rule their subjects, although the Princes themselves must also share the blame. The Princes are a creation of the British and are only pawns in the Imperial game of perpetuating its hold and domination over India by creating as many vested interests as possible and encouraging division of interests in as many spheres as possible.

Solemn undertakings have, however, been given by the British Government to the people of the Indian States. In his minute of 1860, Lord Canning set forth the principle that the 'Government of India is not precluded from stepping in to set right such serious abuses in a Native Government as may threaten any part of the country

with anarchy, when there shall be sufficient reason to do so.' And there are instánces where this principle has been applied. Successive Crown Representatives have never failed to admonish the Indian Princes on important occasions. But these admonitions, delivered on ceremonial occasions, are rarely meant to be taken seriously, and therefore remain mere scraps of paper. In spite of the Irwin Memorandum of 1927, Winterton's famous declaration of February 21, 1938, and the speeches of the last Crown Representative, Lord Linlithgow, by way of advice to the small States, which are instances of efforts to set right the affairs of the States, maladministration is still rife in the States and the welfare of the people utterly neglected.

It is well known that the record of the Political Agents in the Indian States who represent the Paramount Power is sometimes tainted with intrigue, although the work and conduct of some of the distinguished officers have done some good. The Political Department still seems to be obsessed with the idea of the 'White Man's Burden'. Its activities are hidden from the public gaze and it enjoys a unique and favoured position. It has its own code of laws, rules, procedure, precedents and regulations and carries on its work under the direct control of the Crown Representative.

The deplorable state of administration in the States has naturally created great resentment among the people of the States as well as in British India. It is due to this bitterness that the States' people have organized the All-India States Peoples' Conference, whose main objective is to offer resistance to all oppressive measures of the Princes in order to force them to improve their administrative machinery according to the needs of their subjects. The Conference is inspired by the Indian National Con-

gress.

The Congress, at the Haripura session, adopted a policy of non-intervention in the affairs of the States. Though on the face of it such a decision seems to run counter to the claim of the Congress to represent the whole of India, a close and dispassionate examination of the implications of this policy indicates that it is in the ultimate interests of the States' people themselves. The object of the Congress in the Haripura Resolution was to create a feeling of self-confidence among the States' people. The Congress rightly felt that the people must first gain strength, without which no outside intervention could help them effectively. The events that followed the adoption of the resolution proved the wisdom of this policy. A spirit of self-reliance and a sense of responsibility distinguish the activities of the States' people now.

Mahatma Gandhi, who was responsible for shaping the Congress policy towards the States, has said: 'The policy of non-intervention by the Congress was, in my opinion, a perfect piece of statesmanship, when the people of the States were not awakened. That policy would be cowardice when there is all-round awakening among the people of the States and a determination to go through a long course of suffering for the vindication of their just rights. If once this is recognized, the struggle for liberty, whenever it takes place, is the struggle for all India. Whenever the Congress thinks it can usefully intervene, it must intervene.'

There was, no doubt, some initial dissatisfaction with the Congress policy, but its wisdom was realized later. Today from Kashmir in the north to Travancore in the south, the political consciousness of the States' people has been aroused and whatever be the form that the agitation

has taken in different States, the demand throughout has been for responsible Government, i.e. Government of the people, by the people, for the people of the Indian States under the aegis of their Rulers.

This happy consummation, however, appears to have disturbed the minds, if not the schemes, of the Imperialists who want to use the Princes as bulwarks against the rising tide of the forces of liberty, nationalism and democracy. At the same time, the awakening of the States' people has also created a stir in the otherwise solemn dovecotes of the Princes and some of them have at last begun to understand the significance of the new trends. A few have announced their intention to introduce some constitutional reforms in their States to placate the progressive elements among their subjects. But these reforms, which take an unconscionably long time to materialize, are halting and half-hearted. The personal purse of the rulers is not within the purview of the Assemblies in the States. The Princes' civil lists remain untouched. In some of the Western countries where constitutional monarchs rule, the civil list has been considerably reduced and is also subject to the sanction of Parliament. For instance, in England the civil list stands today at about one-fifteenth of one per cent of the total budget of Britain, but in the Indian States—even in the smallest States where the general revenue is not sufficient even to finance the most essential needs of their subjects—the Privy Purse amounts to from five to fifteen per cent of the total revenue of the State. The poor subjects have to pay for the inordinate luxury of their rulers who, in many cases, are away from their States most of the year, holidaying in hill resorts or gambling on race-courses.

Surely the Paramount Power can force its feudatories to adjust their expenditure in accordance with the re-

venues of their States and the needs of their subjects. But the British Government choose to sit on the fence and is indifferent to complaints about the rulers. Already the struggle for freedom in British India is causing increasing anxiety to Britain. She has no intention to add to her worries. She therefore feels that if the Princes' autocracy is given a long lease, it can be a stranglehold on British India, hindering it in its efforts to frame a free and democratic constitution. And the Princes have played the part assigned to them well. They have been obstructing the freedom of India at the instigation of their foreign masters. But their position is really pitiable, though it does not appear to be so on the surface. Like one caught between the devil and the deep sea they do not know whether to go with their people who demand responsible government or with the Paramount Power which goads them to reject their people's demands. For the present, they are carrying out the dictates of Delhi. But how long can they hold on to such a policy ? For, the onward march of India towards her ultimate goal of independence cannot be resisted for all time to come. Prof. Berriedale Keith has argued that the Princes must not be allowed to impose a veto on India's constitutional progress. He is of the opinion that the Paramount Power should avoid interfering, but at the same time should advise the States, particularly those which are more backward, to reform their administration. But will the British Government do that ?

On the Princes themselves lies a great responsibility. They should realize that their fate is linked with their own people and not with their foreign masters, and if their helpless position is to be improved, they must consider themselves an integral part of the nation instead of attaching themselves to the Imperial machine as they are

doing now. In Mahatma Gandhi's words, if the machine topples over, they may disappear unless they become part of, and depend upon, the nation. They must march with the times and strive for, and make common cause with the masses in their fight for India's freedom. If their order is to save itself from extinction, it must mix with the masses and draw inspiration from them in the immediate present and not rest on the laurels of a petrified past. They must not depend any more on foreign protection, but should make themselves worthy of protection from their own countrymen. They are yet to convince their countrymen that they have a place in this country as reformed and enlightened rulers. An undiluted despotism can have no justification for existence in these days and it may not be tolerated for long by the people of the States or by a free and democratic India. The least that the States' rulers can do is to restore immediately the civil rights of their subjects, guarantee the liberty of their person and safety of their property and abolish the iniquitous laws under which their subjects have been groaning for centuries. The Paramount Power, in which they so pathetically place their faith, is not their best friend after all. Only the confidence of their people, gained by granting them responsible government, will stand them in good stead in the hour of dire need.

Let the Princes emulate the King of England and become constitutional rulers. That is the only way of preserving their rule. If they are reasonable, Indians may tolerate them. Gandhiji once said : ' For my part I desire no abolition, but conversion of their autocracy into trusteeship, not in name but in reality. The arbitrary powers they enjoy should go. The liberty of the people should not depend upon the will of an individual, however noble and ancient may be his descent. Nor can any

person, whether Prince or a princely zamindar or merchant, be the sole owner and disposer of possessions, hereditary or self-acquired.'

Gandhiji has also laid down certain minimum conditions which the rulers should fulfil, if they are to be worthy of their peoples' trust. They are:

(1) Their subjects should have full civil liberty, so long as it is not used to promote violence, directly or indirectly. This includes freedom of the Press and freedom to receive newspapers which do not promote violence.

(2) The people of the States should be free to form associations and educate public opinion in favour of establishing responsible government in their own States.

(3) Indians outside the States should be allowed to enter them without let or hindrance, so long as their activities are not directed towards the destruction of the States in question.

(4) The Privy Purse should be limited so that it does not exceed one-tenth of the income where it ranges between 10 lakhs and 15 lakhs of rupees per year, and in no case should the purse exceed three lakhs of rupees per year. It should include all the private expenses of the ruler (for example, palace expenses, cars, stables, the ruler's guests) except those which have reference to the performance of any public duty, which should be clearly defined.

(5) The Judiciary should be independent and permanent, and free from all interference. In order to ensure uniformity of practice and strict impartiality, appeal to the High Court of the Province within which the State in question is situated should be allowed. This may not be possible without a change in the law governing the High Courts. It can be easily altered if the States

agree.

One of the major events that stirred the Indian States during World War II was the 'merger scheme', which sought to amalgamate the administrative machinery of some of the smaller States with the adjoining bigger States. The revenues of these States are hopelessly meagre and most of it goes to meet the personal expenses of the rulers, with the result that practically nothing is left for carrying on the administration. It was thought that by giving effect to the new scheme the smaller States would be spared the necessity of maintaining public services for which they were not in a position to pay. A similar suggestion was made by Mahatma Gandhi and some other national leaders long ago, but it was only during the war that the Crown Representative saw the wisdom of such a plan. A *communique* to this effect was issued in April, 1943. The smaller States in the Western India Agency in Gujerat were sought to be merged with Baroda and other major contiguous States.

It was but natural that there should be vehement opposition from the States concerned, for it infringed upon their sovereignty. The question as to which of the States should be classified 'smaller States' that came under the category envisaged in the Government *communique* is still a matter of controversy. The Government declaration did not give any clear-cut definition of a 'small State'. Prof. Rangachari, in his book, *The Future of Indian States*, is of the opinion that States with an income of less than Rs. 50 lakhs may be regarded as small States. Lord Halifax, a former Crown Representative in India, considered a State with less than Rs. 20 lakhs revenue as a small one. Whatever may be the differences of opinion on this issue, it should be recognized on all sides that the only criterion which should weigh

in this respect is the capacity of a State to secure the welfare of its subjects and to achieve administrative efficiency, which alone can justify, if at all, the perpetuation of any form of hereditary rule.

The dependence of the Indian Princes on the Paramount Power and the scant regard which the latter pay in its dealings with the Princes, were revealed when they came in conflict with the Political Department and the Political Adviser to the Crown Representative. The Standing Committee of the Princes' Chamber submitted their resignation *en masse* a step which has no precedent in the history of the relations between the Princes and the Paramount Power. The exact reason for this unusual step yet remains a mystery, but indications show that this was meant as a protest against some of the activities of the Political Department which was interfering more and more in every sphere of the States' administration.

This is only a foretaste of the shape of things to come and the Princes would do well to realize this clear fact betimes and throw in their lot with their own people and the nation. As Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya, a former President of the All-India States' Peoples' Conference, says: 'If the Princes and their subjects are to live together at peace with one another as one common organized political entity functioning to a common end, it cannot be that the present arrangement in which the Princes have all the power and the people have all the obligations can continue for any length of time without serious disturbance of the tranquillity that prevails just at this moment.'

The Princes must realize that the day will come very soon when instead of prayers and petitions, the people will force the Princes to make concessions. And the only

way of averting a struggle, whose result none can foresee with any certainty, is to hand over to the people power and responsibility with good grace.

Will our Princes take a lesson from this war and march with the times and become, as Gandhiji suggested, the peoples' trustees, or must they remain tied to the Imperial chariot-wheel ?

CHAPTER XXI

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE— THE UPHEAVAL

The war had affected every aspect of life in India as it has done in other parts of the world; but in no country did its effect on social and economic life prove so disastrous as in India. The change for the worse that has come over India as a result of this devastating war has altered the basic structure of the country almost beyond recognition. In her chequered history, India has endured many an ordeal, but she has never witnessed the ghastly sight of hungry mothers snatching away food from their dying children, husbands running away from their houses, fathers selling their daughters, sons and wives for handful of rice, and the hungry and emasculated millions shifting aimlessly on the open pavements of the largest city of the country begging for a morsel of food. But such was the tragic experience that India had to pass through during this war. The Bengal famine would remain for ever in man's memory as a grim record of British rule in India, and even if posterity forgets all about the awful war of 1939-45, it will never forget those tragic years in India's history, years during which millions only knew misery, hunger and destitution.

A number of factors were responsible for the wholesale change in our social life. The most important was the political subjection of India. After all, the war was a global one and as such, there was hardly any nation on earth which did not feel its effects. But, countries

where governments were responsible to the people approached these problems with a view to safe-guarding their people's interests, and adjusted themselves to the new emergency with as little friction as possible. For instance, Britain, which even in normal times has to depend for her sustenance upon imports, was able promptly to check the soaring prices of commodities, and the increase in prices which was inevitable was only to the extent of 25 per cent. But in the case of India, the story was different. She had no National Government and the administration was neither competent nor anxious to face the situation and meet the grave national crisis squarely. The average citizen had no confidence in those who were in the seats of power, who in turn made no sincere attempt to satisfy public opinion and seek their co-operation. And on top of all this, the national leaders who alone could have commanded public support for the stringent measures that were required to stem the tide of inflation had been clapped behind prison bars. The results were catastrophic. Anti-social activities were on the increase, intense profiteering, hoarding and black marketing were rampant all over the country, and consequently the prices of all materials shot up suddenly by 300 to 400 per cent. The country faced food shortage of an unprecedented nature, and this latter developed into a widespread famine, the like of which the country had never seen before. Although shortage of food was more or less common throughout India, Bengal was the worst affected area in this respect. Famine descended on Bengal almost suddenly. There was no natural calamity, no failure of crops, no drought, no flood to herald the approach of famine. Calcutta and the world outside realized the extent of the tragedy only when millions of destitutes flocked to the Metropolis from the interior of the province ; countless thousands had died in

the remote villages before a single voice was raised on their behalf. There were no officials, no police vigilance, and no aeroplanes which had been so very active only a year ago during the August disturbances.

Bengal had, it is true, faced famine before. British historians have recorded that cycles of famine and pestilence had visited Bengal with a strange precision and certainty. Hunter refers to the amazing circumstances in which the kingdom of Gour fell a victim to pestilence just when the Moghul Empire was spreading its tentacles round Bengal. In one year, the great and beautiful city, once the pride of Bengal, vanished and, as Hunter puts it, it became the hunting ground of tigers and monkeys. Then came the Moghul Empire, flourished a while and disappeared. After a few centuries, came the notorious famine of 1770—just after the battle of Plassey, when the British were trying to establish their suzerainty over Bengal. In this terrible famine of 1770 'at least one-third of the inhabitants', according to the estimate of Warren Hastings, were swept away. Pestilence. cholera, small-pox, among others, took heavy toll. All this happened in the eighteenth century. But today, we are under the benign rule of the British, who claim to have banished famine from India. And yet in the year of grace 1943, Indians were perishing in hundreds of thousands for want of food, and were abandoned to their fate. They were wandering in remote villages, on the public streets of Calcutta and other district towns of the province—pale, meagre, fainting, emaciated ghost-like figures, victims of famine. Some lay on the ground with no expectation of help. only looking forward to death for their deliverance, others dragging themselves on in search of any nourishment, throwing themselves at the feet of the more fortunate Europeans or of anyone who happened

to cross their way, begging for a morsel of food. Infants were deserted by their mothers and some expired at their mother's breasts. Everywhere were to be seen the dying and the dead ; the groans of destitute humanity rent the air, not for a day, or a month, but for one whole year. And the poignancy of the tragedy is heightened when one remembers that it has been brought about by the inefficiency of the bureaucracy and corruption of officialdom. In any other country a desperate people would have broken out in open rebellion. But India was helpless ; her leaders were in jail and the Government, on the plea of a war emergency, assumed extraordinary powers to maintain their stranglehold on the nation.

Who is responsible for this dreadful famine in Bengal ? The obvious answer, of course, is that it was the Government, but then, which Government ? Is it the Provincial Government of Bengal, or the Government of India or the British Government ? A close analysis of the various factors that were at work during the pre-famine period reveals that all these Governments must collectively bear the responsibility, though the part which each one of them played may vary in degree. When the threat of famine was referred to in the British Parliament, the then Secretary of State for India, Mr Leopold Amery, failed to realize the gravity of the situation and brushed it aside on the plea that it was a matter for the Governments of the land, that is, the Central and Provincial Government. When the subject was raised in the Central Assembly the Government of India spokesmen unhesitatingly blamed the Government of Bengal, and the latter in its turn accused Delhi. One fact emerges from all this wrangling ; it is that all of them were right in a way, but not wholly so. Mr Amery was right in his contention, inasmuch as the

Bengal Government was primarily responsible for the famine. It was directly concerned with it ; so also was the Government of India, for its responsibility did not cease with the advent of Provincial autonomy. The Central Government, when it accused Bengal, was only imitating Whitehall in passing on the blame to a Government under it. The Provincial Government, however, was equally right in its emphatic denunciation of the charges from above. It declared that in spite of its anxiety to meet the crisis, it could not succeed in view of the unwarranted intervention of the Centre in its affairs, without at the same time vesting adequate power in it.

But all of them were likewise wrong inasmuch as none of them could disown responsibility. The State should have realized that it was its own ultimate responsibility to provide enough food for all. It was abundantly clear that a policy of *laissez faire* in the matter of food supply and distribution would lead nowhere and would probably end in a catastrophe. When it became known that there was a food shortage, the British Government should have brought all its resources to bear on the problem in order to remedy the situation. The principle of State responsibility in the feeding of the people has been recommended by the United Nations Conference on Food and Agriculture. Presiding over the destinies of the great Indian Empire, Mr Amery had certainly an obligation to safeguard the welfare of its people ; he could not be self-complacent by shutting his eyes to the horrible picture of millions going about naked and dying of starvation. The Central Government took shelter under the fantastic plea that the Provinces were autonomous bodies under the Government of India Act of 1935 and that after the advent of Provincial Autonomy, it could not interfere in the affairs of the Provinces. But we know

of many instances where the Government of India has not hesitated to intervene and direct the policies of Provincial Governments and enforce its wishes whenever it wanted. As a matter of fact, the Provincial Government complained, during the famine, of frequent unwarranted intervention from the Centre ; but all such intervention was at the wrong moment or with a wrong directive.

All this betrays a lack of co-operation and proper understanding which are so essential for the good governance of any country. The need for co-ordination was recognized by the Famine Enquiry Commission which was appointed by the Government of India, with Sir John Woodhead, a former Governor of Bengal, as Chairman to investigate the causes of the food shortage and the subsequent epidemics in India, particularly in Bengal, in the year 1943, and to make recommendations for preventing their recurrence. In its final report the Commission says : 'The need also exists for the establishment of permanent and recognized machinery for co-operation of food administration at the Centre as well as in the Provinces and States.'

There was, of course, the All-India Food Conference. But the Commission suggested that in the place of 'ad hoc' conferences summoned at irregular intervals, a permanent organization should be established which may be called the All-India Food Council. This, they urged, should be recognized both by the Central Government and the Government of Provinces and States as the common machinery for co-ordinating the activities of these Governments in forming and executing a common food policy for the country as a whole.

The question of food shortage was one with which the Central Government was directly concerned. It was the Government of India which discouraged the Provin-

cial Governments from building up food stocks in 1942. This would have prevented the charging of fabulous prices and also averted the grim ordeals of 1943. It was the Central Government which fixed the minimum price of wheat against the wishes of the Punjab Government, and later abandoned it. Again, it was the Government of India which after having allowed un-co-ordinated control to the Provinces for two years, suddenly forced free trade on Orissa, Bihar and Assam at the instance of the Bengal Government, which was by then showing every sign of panic. All this only indicated that the Central Government had not made up its mind on any policy in regard to food and allowed things to drift, only taking decisions as occasion demanded ; and, in the very nature of things, such decisions could not benefit the people of India as a whole.

Then there was the problem of transport. It has been stated that the toll in human lives taken by the famine in Bengal and the havoc it wrought was due not so much to actual shortage of food as to the inability to distribute food promptly and efficiently. This was in a large measure due to the transport muddle, and only the Government of India should be blamed for this, as transport was a Central responsibility. The Railways and the ports, the two principal channels of transport, were under the direct management of the Government of India. It was, therefore, the clear duty of the Central Government to make adequate transport arrangements to carry whatever foodstuffs were available from surplus areas to the deficit zones. But instead of evolving a timely plan and procedure for prompt movements of food in co-operation with the Government and the people of Bengal, the Government of India was indifferent and for some time denied the very existence of a famine.

The Government of India should have taken stock of the food situation in the whole country immediately after the outbreak of war, gone deep into the causes of the food shortage and explored all possible avenues for increasing the available supplies. This was done by every other nation at war almost at the very start of hostilities. Even Britain, which is but a tiny island compared with India, faced the situation squarely and tided over the food crisis that threatened, the Food Minister taking prompt steps to secure the nation's food supply. But in India there was not even a Minister of Food until the war was well advanced. Even so, there was no concerted plan for facing the crisis until about three years after the first shot had been fired, and by then the situation had gone out of control. It was only in 1942, when the Indian Central Cotton Committee and the Advisory Board of the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research recommended growing more food, that the Government of India realized the necessity of calling a Food Production Conference with the object of taking concerted steps for increasing the production of food and fodder crops in India. Since then, the Grow More Food campaign has been conducted by the Central, Provincial and State administrations. But it has been mostly a half-hearted and face-saving affair which, in the absence of the willing co-operation of the public, has proved a flop. Even the Government-sponsored Woodhead Commission was not happy about the progress of the campaign and in its report (page 378) expressed disappointment. 'The results achieved by the Grow More Food campaign during the two years 1942-43 and 1943-44 have not been spectacular,' says the Report. We shall take this matter up in greater detail in the following chapter while investigating the real causes behind the food shortage in the country and the

circumstances which led to the great famine in Bengal.

As for the responsibility of the Provincial Government in Bengal in respect of the famine, the less said the better. The Bengal famine is a black chapter in the records of Provincial administration ; it is the greatest blot on British rule in India as well. With a most unsympathetic Governor at the head of the administration, always obstructive and interfering, and a Ministry wedded to party politics, corruption and nepotism, the food situation could not but take the grave turn it did. When the whole of the Province was in the throes of a great calamity, the Ministry, like fiddling Nero, were engaged in wordy recriminations in the public Press to decide whether the present situation was of their own creation or a legacy from the last Ministry. But what is worse was that not only were they incompetent to stop the rot, but they suppressed facts and did not, for a considerable time, divulge the causes of the famine even to the legislature or the public of Bengal. Why did they play so lightheartedly with the valuable lives of millions of their countrymen ? Was a reactionary Governor interfering too much or too frequently with ordinary ministerial affairs ? If the Bengal Ministry were so helpless and powerless, the only honourable course for them would have been to quit office and shift the burden of administrative responsibility on to the shoulders of the Bureaucracy. But instead, they stuck to their posts like leeches and allowed themselves to be executives of policies, in the making of which, probably, they had had no voice. This was where their responsibility for the calamity lay.

CHAPTER XXII

THE CAUSES OF THE TRAGEDY

The horror called the Bengal Famine was brought about by a combination of strange circumstances. It is sought to be explained and explained away by the different authorities. Mr Amery says that it was due to over-eating! Mr Beverley Nichols blames Nature for this food shortage. Some suggest that the tragedy was due to over-population and our incapacity to produce enough food. There are others who say that it was all due to the absence of a timely and organized campaign for growing more food, to the stoppage of the usual imports to supplement the depleted food stock of the country, to the unjustifiable action of the authorities in exporting foodgrains from India for the use of the armies in the Far East and the Middle East; and there is one section which believes that greedy Indian businessmen brought this disaster on the country by their anti-social activities, namely, hoarding, blackmarketing and profiteering in foodgrains. Lastly, there are the socio-economists who adduce currency inflation as the real cause of the disaster. Let us examine these various arguments with special reference to Bengal and try to find out where the truth lies.

The first of these arguments need not be taken seriously, although it has come from no less a personage than Mr Amery, Secretary of State for India, during the crisis. Mr Amery is noted for his confusion of thought, his inconsistencies and the liberties he takes with truth in dealing with Indian affairs, in his search for grounds to

justify the action taken by the Government of India under his own direction. We need only quote what was said by the representatives of the British Government in India at the Hot Springs Conference in the United States of America about the food situation in India to expose the hollowness of Mr Amery's argument. They admitted that a third of the Indian people were habitually underfed even in normal times. The verdict of the Famine Enquiry Commission also supports this view. The report of the Commission says:

'The diet of the greater part of the population is unbalanced and does not contain enough protective foods. Within this majority group there is a considerable section, perhaps amounting to 30 per cent of the whole population, which does not get enough to eat, i.e., is short of both energy-yielding and protective foods. The poorer classes, both urban and rural, cannot afford to purchase a balanced diet — even if protective foods were available in sufficient quantities.' (pages 387-88)

And yet Mr Amery had the temerity to say that Indians were eating too much even in the abnormal times of war, when recognized authorities proclaimed from the house-tops—and it was echoed throughout the world—that in Bengal alone in 1943 over two lakhs of people were dying every month of sheer starvation.

Between Mr Beverley Nichols and Mr Amery there is not much difference. His latest publication, *Verdict on India*, shows how much regard he pays to truth and impartial investigation, in arriving at his conclusions. People who had lived in India during the Bengal famine of 1943 would testify that this catastrophe was not due to any natural calamity, as on previous occasions, but was the direct result of the misguided policy pursued by the authorities responsible for the administration of that

province and the country. To say that Nature was responsible for the famine is to clutch, like a dying man, at a straw. Mr Nichols' anxiety to exonerate the authorities concerned has forced him to resort to arguments that, on the face of them, are ridiculous and would not stand a moment's scrutiny. They were intended only for an English audience, to whom no arguments are silly or false if only they will justify the conduct of the rulers.

Let us next analyse the Malthusian doctrine of population and see whether India is in a position to produce more food. It is true that in India, as in any other country of the world, there has been some increase in the population, but this was not wholly due to a growing birth-rate. If we make a comparative study of the population figures of various parts of the world, we shall see that India's rate is far below that of many countries in the West, including Britain. According to official Census figures, the population of India increased only by 32 per cent between 1880 and 1930, whereas that of England and Wales went up by 54 per cent. It is evident that in respect of population, India has not such huge proportions as might lead to famine. The influx of people from abroad during the war, mostly military personnel for purposes of defence, has to a great extent complicated the issue. The point to be considered, however, is whether there has been a corresponding increase in our food production, and if not, why not. Prof. Radhakamal Mukerjee claims that while the index of food in 1937-38 stood at 110, the index for population had gone up to 125, basing the figures for both at 100 as the average for the period from 1910 to 1914.

Kale Mitchell, however, is of the opinion that 'between 1910 and 1930, the population increased by about 17 per cent, food production by about 30 per cent.'

Mitchell, of course, is not blind to the fact that the present production of food is wholly inadequate, but he attributes this inadequacy to the system of production and the failure to develop the country's resources. He did not say that the food produced could not meet the needs of the population. 'In fact,' he maintains, 'there is every reason to believe that by making full use of her resources, India could support a far larger population than at present.'

What about our capacity to produce enough food for our people? It is wrong to suggest that India with her vast area—she is bigger than all Europe minus Russia—cannot grow sufficient food for her own needs. If the authorities took proper steps, the present shortage could have been met without much trouble. Whatever might be the future prospects of India's industrialization, the country is at present essentially agricultural. There are also immense possibilities for developing her agriculture and increasing her productive capacity by the application of modern scientific knowledge and the use of technical appliances. The mere existence of theoretical possibilities is not, however, sufficient; they must be realized. Can the agriculturists in India put forth the effort needed to make India self-sufficient? Have they the necessary resources? Are they suitably organized for co-operative effort? Large-scale agricultural production depends to a large extent on these factors.

In this connexion it is essential that the land systems should be revised and improved to suit modern conditions and to encourage our agricultural labour to devote their whole attention and energy to large-scale production of food. There is, of course, no dearth of material resources, neither is there any lack of skilled labour; only proper, timely, adequate and effective action on the part of the

Government is lacking and if this were forthcoming India could be self-sufficient in the matter of food. The Woodhead Commission report was emphatic on this point. The report insisted that India 'does not lack the material resources necessary for advancement and prosperity, but these can be developed only by the efforts of human beings—by the Governments and people of India—and success depends on the spirit which sustains the country in the tremendous task with which it is faced.'

Apathy and defeatism characterized the people's attitude in the past. The State too was half-hearted about formulating plans, halting and ineffective in their execution. The responsibility of the State in this regard has been recognized by all authorities to be very great. To quote the Woodhead Commission report :

'A great responsibility rests on Governments, administrators and Government servants of all grades, in organizing and stimulating the work of "nation building". The duties of modern Governments extend far beyond the maintenance of law and order ; they include within their compass social and economic development in all its aspects.'

Some authorities have suggested a curtailment in the present growth of India's population to offset the shortage of food. There is some weight in this argument, though it is true that if the vast resources of India are fully exploited, they should meet the country's needs. There is no National Government in India to tackle the food problem efficiently and effectively and even if one is installed in the near future, it would certainly take years to solve this complex problem. Until then a curtailment in the growth of population would appear to be almost inevitable. The Famine Enquiry Commission also supports this suggestion and recommends a curtailment of

India's population. The report suggests :

'Whatever success in increasing food production can be achieved, ultimately a decrease in the rate of population growth is not only desirable but necessary. While an addition of a further 100 millions to the population within the next 25 years must be anticipated, the essential point is whether when that figure is reached, the whole "reproductive situation," including the relation between the birth-rate and the death-rate, is favourable to continued growth at an equal or accelerated rate, or whether the population has reached, or is approaching, a position of stability'. (pp. 385-86)

We have seen in the foregoing chapter the dilatory and half-hearted measures which the Government of India took in launching its Grow More Food campaign and how it eventually proved a failure. A large increase in agricultural production in India by an extension of the area of cultivable land and an improvement in the yield per acre through irrigation and other agricultural measures could not be achieved without intensive and sustained effort on the part of both Government and the people. But where was the popular co-operation? As Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru said, never in the history of the British connexion with India was there such a wide gulf between the Government and the people as existed during the second World War. The measure, therefore, could not succeed to the extent it should have if it had been able to secure the voluntary co-operation of the people. The Woodhead Commission rightly pointed out that what was necessary was the laying down of a clear-cut agricultural policy and the provision of administrative machinery for its efficient execution. At present the most widely consumed cereal, rice, is in short supply and the production of protective foods—pulses, meat, fruits,

fish and vegetables—is quite insufficient. But though the growth of scientific knowledge and technology has opened up abundant opportunities for development in agricultural and other spheres, the authorities do not utilize them. The absence of a timely scientific and organized campaign for increasing production was one of the factors responsible for the unfortunate food situation in the country. Not only were the necessary steps not taken at the right moment, but, on the contrary, a large quantity of the available food was exported from the country on the plea that the needs of defence personnel were being met. It was not realized that in view of the serious position that threatened Bengal, it was disastrous to the interests of the Allied Powers themselves to export food from that province. As a matter of fact, supply of food to Bengal, which adjoined the eastern war zone, should have been considered a war measure, let alone the responsibility of the Government to the people.

To add to the misery of the Province, imports from abroad were totally stopped on the pretext of shipping difficulties. Even before the war India as a whole was not self-sufficient in foodgrains. Although her total wheat production yielded a little surplus that was exported, she was deficient in rice, and the small exportable surplus of wheat was offset by large imports of rice. But with the loss of imports from Burma and adverse seasonal conditions in 1943, the situation worsened rapidly. The production of foodgrains in India had of course increased, but consumption had increased too owing to the growth of population, a higher *per capita* consumption and the requirements of the defence services. India was still in need of imports. The annual deficit of foodgrains has been calculated to be about 10 million tons, even apart

from the additional military demand. Even the Gregory Foodgrains Committee recommended that India should become a net importer of foodstuffs and should import one and a half million tons of foodgrains every year. It was therefore necessary to maintain the regular flow of imports of foodgrains to supplement the stocks depleted during the war. Or at least exports of foodgrains from India should have been totally stopped. But none of these steps was taken. On the contrary, Mr Amery described the situation in the British Parliament in a strain somewhat like this:

'Yes, there is some trouble in India and in Bengal, but there is no shortage of food stuffs in the country; there is only hoarding and maldistribution and the Government is doing what it can to solve this problem.'

This of course was a totally false picture. I do not mean to suggest that Indian businessmen—at least a section of them—can escape the charge that they had their share in bringing about the calamity of 1943. It is true that this World War has made the rich richer and the poor poorer. In spite of a thousand and one Ordinances and Rules, black marketing was openly indulged in hoarding and profiteering were widely in vogue all over the country and the Government found itself utterly helpless to check these anti-social activities, which cost millions of human lives. All this is true. But to lay the blame for the food-shortage entirely on the merchants is wrong. As we have seen, the stoppage of imports, the continuance of exports, and the failure of the Government's 'Grow More Food' campaign were, among others, the causes which led the country to disaster. The Woodhead Commission suggested a central reserve of 5,00,000 tons of foodgrains to meet any sudden emergency in the country (pages 382-83) and the Govern-

ment should seriously consider this suggestion to avert further famines in the future. The Commission also hinted that the Russian method might be adopted in our country. Twenty-five years ago Russia was backward and illiterate ; today she is among the most powerful and technically efficient nations of the world. The problems and traditions of India, of course, differ in many respects from those of Russia, 'but her situation is such,' the report adds, 'that a transformation of equal magnitude to that which has occurred in Russia is called for.' (page 331)

One of the direct and important causes of the Bengal famine was the part played by the then Bengal Ministry. It suppressed facts ; it was alleged that high officials indulged in corrupt activities and that bribery was rampant in the distribution of civil supplies contracts. A few of them were hauled up by the War Department Special Intelligence Branch, but the rest went merrily on. During the critical days and months following the retreat from Burma the authorities themselves thought that Japan would, after the conquest of Burma, invade Bengal ; and the authorities could only think of the removal and destruction of leaky country-boats and other conveyances, and the stores of rice from the coastal districts of Bengal to prevent Japan from occupying the country. This created a panic and businessmen at once began hoarding food stocks.

The Ministry itself played a colossal hoax on the unfortunate people of Bengal by declaring that there was really no shortage of foodstuffs, no shortage of rice in Bengal and that the root of the trouble was maldistribution. The Ministry complained that small hoarders, private consumers and agriculturists were mainly responsible for the deplorable state of affairs. As late

as May 17, 1943, Bengal's Civil Supplies Minister said that the worst feature of the last Ministry's food policy was 'its insistence on shortage.' Again he proclaimed, 'There is in fact a sufficiency of foodgrains for the people of Bengal.' God knows what data he had on which to base that remark. Not satisfied with this statement, he proceeded to add that 'full statistical details, which will clearly demonstrate that there is a sufficiency, will shortly be published.' Shortly afterwards, the disastrous famine overtook the whole province and the promised statistics never saw the light of day !

The Bengal Ministry also published a number of leaflets and circulated them freely among the public with a view to allaying the fear that a famine was imminent. In one of the pamphlets it was said: 'Is there a real shortage of food in Bengal ? No, most certainly no.' The Ministry declared that there was sufficient food but they had not taken a census of stocks in the Province before making such a statement. A drive to gather statistics about food, Dr Syamaprasad Mookerji, an ex-minister, stated, was actually decided upon by the previous Ministry but was abandoned on the instructions of no other person than His Excellency the Governor who said that it was not necessary, and that there were more urgent and important things to be done, namely, the removal of rice and boats from the coastal parts of Bengal lest the Japs should come and take advantage of these great resources of the Province.

The last, but possibly the most important, cause of the food shortage in India was the indiscriminate expansion of currency in the interests of the British war efforts which resulted in inflation. In order to prosecute the war effectively the British Government had to purchase huge quantities of war material in India. As the author of

Starving India analysed the situation, if the purchases had been made through the normal methods of cash payments from the British Government's own resources, there might have been little disturbance in the currency and price structure of India. But, instead, the British Government caused the India Government, to whom it could always dictate, to finance all such expenditure in rupees in India, repaying the latter in sterling in London.

The India Government, in its turn, besides giving back large amounts of sterling by way of repatriation of its sterling loans, had been investing such sterling resources mostly in British Government War Bonds and making corresponding entries in the accounts of the Reserve Bank of India. The huge sums of rupee finance the Government needed were procured by the simple expedient of printing off more paper notes. True, as Dr Nemenyi points out, 'this increase in the note issue against sterling is strictly in accordance with law.' But this does not meet the charge that it was inflationary in character ; it only shows that the 'law' provides for an inflationary note issue. Nor could all the arguments about historical precedents for such note issue hide the fact that inflation existed ; it only showed there were precedents for such inflation.

And what a huge and indiscriminate expansion of currency there was during the war ! According to official statistics, the pre-war figure of currency circulation in India (August, 1939) was 170 crores of rupees. (To be precise, it was 172·44 crores on September 1, 1939). But the figure rose to 1,151·21 crores of rupees during the fag end of the war in September, 1945—an increase of about 1,000 crores of rupees ! In view of the heavy increase in the quantity of money and with the volume of goods remaining stationary, a fall in the value of money

followed, and the prices of materials in terms of money went up by leaps and bounds. In other words, money became cheap and goods became correspondingly dear. This application of the Quantity Theory of Money explains the scarcity in the sphere of food during the war.

That the food shortage was brought about by currency inflation and that the Government of India was primarily and wholly responsible for it is borne out by no less a financial expert than Mr (now Lord) Pethick Lawrence who is the present Secretary of State for India. In a debate in Parliament on November 4, 1943 he expressed the view that the main cause of the famine was that a large number of people in certain provinces in India had not got the purchasing power to pay for such foodgrains as would keep them alive. 'The main cause of this increase in price was inflation. For that inflation, the Government of India and nobody else could be held responsible,' said Mr Pethick Lawrence.

The lesson one can draw after this experience during the war is clear. There is no denying the fact that the entire social and economic structure of the country has received a terrible shock, and India must pass through an intensive and extensive programme of rehabilitation. This is the gigantic task which can be performed only by the joint efforts of the Government and the people. This co-operation is absent today because those who are now at the helm of affairs lack both efficiency and integrity and do not enjoy the confidence of the people of the country. The time has come when efforts should be made to win the people over and seek their wholehearted co-operation in the administration. This is indeed a major task and it requires a major change in the present administrative machinery.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE STEP-MOTHERLY ATTITUDE

Progressive countries in the world owe their prosperity to their supremacy as industrial nations. Industries are necessary not only for a high level of income for the people but they are also essential for the manufacture of arms and ammunition for the defence of a country. In fact, they are indispensable for national existence. The necessity for the industrialization of India is greater today than it had been at any time before. Here the *per capita* income is very small and consequently the standard of living is lower than in many of the progressive countries of the world. As Sir Theodore Gregory, the Economic Adviser to the Government of India, remarked: 'Industrialization is the only possible solution for the appalling standards of life in the East.'

And yet industries have been neglected in India for many generations. In the United Kingdom, the annual income per head from industries, in some years, is calculated at about Rs. 600 and the average total income about Rs. 1,013. In the United States of America, the corresponding figures are approximately Rs. 830 and Rs. 1,187. But in India the average annual income is only Rs. 65. This is due to the fact that the government of the land has not tried to encourage the growth of indigenous industries. With the outbreak of the war, the feeling grew in the country that there would be an impetus to industrial development, and there were signs to strengthen this belief. A number of industrial missions from the United Kingdom and the United States of America visited

India and although the ostensible object of all these missions was to study the possibilities of industrial expansion in the country, especially in regard to the manufacture of war materials in the interest of Allied war efforts, it was hoped that these exploratory missions of foreign industrial experts would ultimately help the industrialization of this country.

The Roger Mission came from England, but though Indians were deeply interested in the expansion of the existing industries and in the starting of new ones, they were for all practical purposes kept at arm's length from the real activities of the Roger Mission. Even the representatives of the Federation of the Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the highest organization of the Indian industrialists in India, were not taken into confidence and shown the report which the Mission submitted. The starting of new industries in the country would have substantially and effectively helped the war efforts, but British interests took every possible care to see that, war or no war, no new industries were started in India which could compete with similar industries in Great Britain after the war. No word is too strong to condemn this attitude at a time when the Japanese were at our gates and awaiting an opportunity to invade the country.

Then came the Eastern Group Supply Council which was convened to co-ordinate and stimulate the production of war equipment in the eastern countries of the Empire. The Indian representative in the Council made it crystal-clear that it was not the business of that Council to start new industries in this land even if they were necessary for augmenting the war efforts.

The outlook darkened. The war and other international events were taking a discouraging turn. Just then

another mission from America under the leadership of Dr Grady was invited to India. The members of that Mission treated the Indian commercial and industrial interests with greater courtesy and more frankness than the British Mission led by Sir Alexander Roger. This, however, made no difference whatsoever to the future prospects which lay before us. Despite the representations of the Federation of the Indian Chambers of Commerce, the Grady Report remained unpublished. What we have been told of that report and what has come to light about the arrangement of lease and lend, have only filled the country with apprehensions and made it doubt whether after all, the commitments which were being made without the people's knowledge and consent would not result in mortgaging away the industrial future of India not only to the Britishers but also to the Americans now and for the future. Although President Roosevelt had stated that there would be no reckoning, after the war, of the help given under lease and lend, Dr Grady declared that the lease and lend arrangements were in the nature of barter. Said Mr Walchand Hirachand, the celebrated industrialist of India, commenting on this :

'We do not know whether the Government of India have got any direct approach to the American Government for finalising the terms under the lease and lend. If India has to return the obligations under lease and lend by sending raw materials to the United States after the war, and if India has been and will be sacrificed by the United Kingdom in her own larger interests, for making it a victim of the so-called new liberal tariff policy, for increasing the world trade of America and England, as a result of the Atlantic Charter and the lease and lend commitments, may I ask whether there could or would be any prospects of a bright industrial future for India,

and whether India will have that freedom which she needs, unfettered by any outside powers, for developing her own industries, for building up her own economic strength and for working out her own economic destiny ?'

India, we saw does not lack in natural resources, and in this respect, she is as strong as any other nation. She has unlimited man-power, unrivalled by any country except China. And in the present war India has demonstrated that, given fair opportunities, her men could excel the workers of any other country in efficiency and skill. Mr F. R. Picot, the New Zealand Member of the Eastern Group Supply Council, after studying India's labour during the war said: 'As one travels through the factories of India, it is inspiring to find that as a counter-part to Britain's famous "we can take it", has arisen the determined cry of Indian industry "we can make it".'

But what was the net result of all these investigations of Indian resources during the war ? When all the self-governing countries including the Dominions of the British Commonwealth made almost incredible progress in their industries as a result of the joint efforts of their Governments and their people, India, due to her political dependency, practically remained where she was before the war. The step-motherly attitude of the Government of India, dictated as it always had been by a foreign master at Whitehall, would not allow her industries to thrive, lest the effects of a large-scale industrialization of India should recoil on Britain herself. It might make India an economically prosperous nation which would enable her to fight her battle of independence more effectively and with greater reliance on her own power. At the same time, a highly industrialized India might deprive Great Britain of her Indian market for exports. Reports had appeared in the Press—and they had not been contradicted and even

a responsible industrialist like Sir M. Visveswarayya had to refer to it—that as a result of the meetings of the Eastern Group Conference and the visit of the Roger Mission from England, the Government of this country decided that the establishment of heavy industries required for war material should be kept out of India !

The attitude of the Government of India has only strengthened such fears. How many times have representations been made to the Government urging that more facilities should be accorded to non-official businessmen to expand heavy industries during the war which provided golden opportunities for them. Had the Government taken any real interest in Indian industrialization, had they availed themselves of the big opportunity provided by the war and actively encouraged Indian aspirants or if they had adopted at least an attitude of benevolent neutrality instead of ill-concealed hostility, the industrial map of India would have changed today beyond recognition. In every country industries got a stimulus during the war, the inducements being the stoppage of imports, rise in prices and a ready market in executing the war orders of the Government. Today national leaders both in Australia and Canada are justly proud that there has been a revolutionary industrial expansion in their countries since the commencement of the present war. But where is India in this race ?

Let us take some of the most important heavy industries which are considered in every country as essential parts of its war efforts. One of them is the ship-building industry. One lesson brought home by modern wars is that if a maritime country wishes to maintain itself and to safeguard its existence, it must possess both a navy of supply and a navy of defence, of her own. It is, however, a tragedy of the British rule in this country that

though India had been struggling for over half a century to build up a powerful national merchant navy adequate to carry her large coastal and overseas trade and to guard her strategic coastline, she was not allowed to do so. This was due, among other reasons, to the bitter and relentless opposition of British shipping interests to our national aspirations and to the absence of a national shipping policy on the part of the Government. Promises were held out and assurances given profusely by the Government in the past, but no effective steps were taken to redeem these promises. After a struggle of over half a century, national shipping carries today less than 25 per cent of the coastal trade. It has no place worth the name in the overseas trade of India.

There is no difference of opinion about the necessity of India having her own powerful navy. Besides, the loss of Allied mastery over the Indian Ocean and the practical cessation of trade and navigation in the important areas of these waters in the early part of the war brought home to us the bitter truth that we cannot merely depend upon the British Navy. This fact was also recognized even by the highest naval officers of the Government of India. It was no less a man than Admiral Sir Fitz Herbert who emphasized the imperative need of a ship-building industry for India. In a broadcast in August 1940, the Admiral said :

'I would like to mention also another subject vital to India's progress and having a close relation to our naval needs. It is the ship-building industry. It is obvious to me and I think to a great many other people, that the sooner a ship-building industry is started the better for India.'

Sir Fitz Herbert added:

'Such an industry to be successful needs courage,

enterprise and forethought. That all these are present in India is a fact that cannot be denied.'

But Government paid no heed to the words of their own supreme naval expert and did not consider the efforts made by Indians to build up this industry as a part of the war efforts. And yet the slogan throughout the world during the war was: 'Let us have ships, more ships and still more ships.' Nothing exposed more glaringly the subservience of the Government of India to the British vested interests, at the cost of Indian interests, than their indifference to India's efforts to build ships in her own yards.

The picture appears more gloomy when we hear what Mr Walchand Hirachand, the pioneer of Indian national shipping, has to say about the shipping position in wartime India. This is what he said at the first meeting of the Shipping Policy Committee of the Government of India even as late as on December 7, 1944:

'Not only are Indians not allowed to build ships in their own country, but it is not possible for them to obtain ships from other lands. Small as was the fleet of Indian ships at the outbreak of the war, it has played its own part in the defence of the country and in serving the other needs of the war even in theatres far away from its own home waters. War has made even that small fleet smaller than before. That fleet was in the nature of a loan to the Government. The Government had obtained full control over the Indian fleet. It is an elementary principle of business that the borrower returns the loan in the same good condition in which he had obtained it from the lender. I am grieved to say that the Government refuse to recognise this elementary principle of justice in enabling the Indian ship-owners to replace the losses of the ships that were so loaned. British ship-

owners are given ships by the British Government to make good the losses that they may have suffered. That is not the case with India. Indians are not allowed to build ships in their own country. Government do not give ships to replace those which were lost. Whence, then, will there be the National Merchant Navy even to carry on the trade which it was serving before the war, to say nothing of the ideal which has now been placed before us, of such a Navy carrying the world trade?'

We know that there is the Royal Indian Navy, but this is neither owned, managed, controlled by Indians, nor is its policy national. The Royal Indian Navy is only a tiny fleet of small ships, dominated and commanded largely by British officers. India has a big coast-line of about 4,500 miles, and had carried before the war, 70,00,000 tons of coastal trade and 2,50,00,000 tons of overseas trade. The annual value of this overseas import and export trade alone amounts to about Rs. 400 crores at the pre-war figure. It would, therefore, be clear that India must build up truly national forces of defence if it wants to prevent foreign aggression. She requires a powerful fleet of ships of defence owned, managed and controlled by the nationals of her country.

This absence of a national mercantile marine had also been felt during the Bengal famine. Had there been an adequate national mercantile marine, India Government need not have begged of the British Ministry of War Transport for the means of importing foodgrains from other lands. Had there been an adequate merchant marine, our Government could have easily stood up against a Corporation like the U. K. C.C. which had monopolized, supported by British vested interests, the normal channels of trade usually controlled by Indians themselves. Today both Australia and Canada have developed

a ship-building industry because, in the words of Mr Walter Runciman, 'these Dominions have their own shipping policy which is nationalistic in character.'

But it is well-known that the Imperial Government in Britain preach one policy, but practise something quite different in their Colonies and Dependencies. According to Prof Pigou, 'The fear of war was a potent factor in compelling Government to support the shipping industry in England.' But the Government of India, dictated from 'Home', made a categorical declaration early in 1941 that it had no intention of encouraging the ship-building industry as a part of the war efforts (Council of State proceedings, April 2, 1941). This attitude was based on the argument that ships built in India would not be ready for three or four years and war needs obviously could not wait for anything like that length of time. It was a pity that the Government could not think at the moment that the war was going to be a prolonged affair. But even before the war Indian industrialists were crying hoarse for facilities to build up a ship-building industry.

Who was really responsible for this muddle? If America can build four ships per day, and if the Dominions can develop their ship-building industry in the midst of the war, are we not justified in condemning the apathy of our Government in not doing anything to encourage our national efforts even to build one ship during so many long years of war? It would appear from the speeches of the Government of India spokesmen that the Government of the land was practically helpless and was always dominated by the 'Home Government.' The then Commerce Member to the Government of India, Mr N. R. Sarkar, lamented thus the absence of a powerful navy in India :

'One cannot help feeling that, had adequate steps been taken in time to promote the development of an Indian mercantile marine and an Indian navy, our country would have been in a position to play a larger and more effective part in overcoming Axis aggression... I hope the lessons of this war will not be lost upon us and that every effort will be made to help to develop Indian shipping and ship-building industry.'

If the Commerce Member, with all his protestations could not improve the position himself, the only conclusion that one can draw from this is that the Government itself was utterly helpless and powerless. The crux of the problem was that Government in Britain was constantly pulling the wires behind the scene and was anxious to safeguard British vested interests in India. In pursuance of this policy, they viewed all new ventures with suspicion. It is true that having been heavily pressed by the developments of the war in the East in 1942, Great Britain had to swallow the bitter pill and agree in the Cripps Proposals that there should be no reservations for British commercial interests in India. But with the failure of the Cripps Mission, British interests again demanded that the safeguards should be continued. This cry was first raised shortly after the failure of the Cripps Mission by Lord Craigmyle and Lord Catto in the House of Lords. The former relied on the report of the Simon Commission, which should have been deemed to be as dead as Dodo, to support his contention that the Europeans in India held a unique position. They criticized Sir Stafford Cripps and other statesmen for their 'policy of appeasement' and complained that 'the men who, for many generations, have made our rule and our trade in India an example of fairness to all mankind were to be outside its protection'. As long as this short-sighted policy of the British

Government continues in India, there will be obviously no progress in this country whether in war or in peace.

Let us examine another heavy industry, namely, steel. Australia produced no steel before the war, but today its steel production is equal to or has exceeded that of India. But India which had been in the steel business for over 30 years made no substantial progress in this respect even when a war was on. Before the war, India was one of the world's chief exporters of pig iron and both Japan and the United Kingdom obtained an appreciable supply from this country. And yet under war conditions the steel production of India which stood at about 1¼ million tons per annum before the war is now believed to be between 1½ and 2 million tons only. A comparative study of the progress made by other belligerent countries under war conditions puts the picture in its proper perspective. India, as we have seen, is now producing 1½ million tons of steel from all sources. The U. S. A. is producing ½ ton of steel per man, and the United Kingdom 1/3 and Japan 1/5 ton per man. In India if our target is kept as low as 1/50 ton per man, we must be producing about 8 million tons of steel per year. As Sir M. Visvesvarayya said :

'With reasonable encouragement India might have been in a position today to supply all the steel requirements in India to all the powers who are using this country as a base for military operations. The production might have gone up to 5 million tons or more by now, had the Government decided from the beginning of the war to meet the war demand from Indian sources. One over-all result of all these wrong policies has been that the demand for steel for various civilian industries has long ceased to be met and at the present time India is reduced to the necessity of importing steel even for war

purposes from America.'

What about the Textile Industry ? We have only to remember the cloth famine in Bengal and various other parts of the country during the present war to understand the Government's textile policy. It is true that the industry received some impetus during the war and the annual output of cloth which was 4,269 million yards before the war went up in 1941-42 to 4,493 million yards, that is, a rise of about 20 per cent over the pre-war figure. But this rise in the wartime production was practically nothing compared to the increasing civilian and military needs. As a result, cloth was not available anywhere and in Bengal semi-starved millions wandered on the pavements ill-clothed or completely naked. At the outset the authorities showed no keenness in settling this problem and they began purchasing huge stocks of cloth from the individual mills themselves. For the first few months of the war they did not experience much difficulty in procuring cloth for military needs as the Indian mills had adequate stocks with them. But this could not go on for long without precipitating a famine and the Government had to do something to meet the scarcity of cloth. Accordingly, a conference of mill-owners was convened in Bombay in September 1941 to enlist the support and sympathy of the industry and a cotton textile advisory panel was appointed consisting of members from different centres of the textile industry and other interests to advise and negotiate with the Government on behalf of the industry. This panel later drew a comprehensive plan for supplying cloth during the war and also introduced the 'Standard Cloth' to meet civilian needs. This cloth was cheaper and the Central Government used to purchase it at fixed rates and sell it to the Provincial Governments for distribution in their respective areas

under a system of cloth rationing.

All this was done. But the population was increasing during the war, and the developments on the Far East fronts brought large contingents of military personnel from abroad, thus putting a heavy strain on the capacity of the Indian textile mills. The result was a terrible cloth shortage.

The position of the automobile industry during the war was also a tale of Government apathy. A project for starting an automobile industry in India during the war was submitted to the Government as early as July 1941, but this was cold-shouldered. Another scheme was submitted by a Calcutta firm in December 1943 in which it was emphasized that the sponsors were prepared to go ahead with their plan immediately without help from the Government, if only the latter agreed to give them exchange priority and technicians. But even this modest request was rejected. It was only during the last stages of the war that the Government of India permitted two important concerns in the country to issue capital for manufacturing trucks and motor cars. Besides these two concerns, the Mysore State had also already prepared plans to manufacture cars, buses and trucks. The total productive capacity of these three concerns is however not yet known. Even details regarding the time when they would actually start producing automobiles are not yet available. It was reported some time back that Mr Walchand Hirachand had entered into a contract with the Chryslers for going ahead with his automobile scheme. Before, however, Indian concerns actually start producing motor cars, imported cars might already be flooding the country.

Other heavy or light industries in India suffered the same fate during the war. Dr L. C. Jain has drawn a

statistical table giving comparative figures of progress of different countries and India. According to him, if we take production in 1935-39 as the base index, taking it to be 100, the index of American aircraft and ship-building rose to 550, that of machine tools and engines to 370, of electrical machinery to 210 and of other machinery to 190, in 1941. In the same year, in the U. S. A. the index for goods currently consumed was 140. The volume of wartime industrial production in India is as follows :

In 1941-42 the increase in the output of iron and steel was 50 per cent, of cotton textiles 53 per cent, of paper 59 per cent and of jute 3 per cent above the 1938-39 level, but the year 1942-43 registered a considerable fall in all of them except iron and steel. The production of sugar followed an erratic course, for, the index after rising from 100 in 1938-39 to 191 in 1939-40, fell to 120 in 1941-42, but improved to 163 in 1942-43. Compared with 1939-40, however, the sugar output in 1942-43 was less by 15 per cent. Taking the average of the last four years, sugar production increased by 60 per cent ; iron and steel by 44 per cent, paper by 34 per cent, and cotton textiles by 10 per cent, but there was a small fall of 4 per cent in jute. The index of electrical energy improved steadily from 100 in 1938-39 to 135 in 1942-43. On the whole the increase in the industrial output during the last quinquennium was only about 30 per cent. (*Indian Economy During the War*, by Dr L. C. Jain, pp. 31-32).

Dr Jain draws two conclusions from the above statistics ; firstly, the industrial expansion in India was confined to two or three industries while in the U.S.A. it was all round, not excluding even the consumer's goods; secondly, whilst the largest expansion in India had been in iron and steel and paper industries, about 100 and about

60 per cent respectively, the expansion in the U. S. A. of aircraft and ship-building industries was five-fold by 1941 while during 1942 and 1943 America established new world records. In the United Kingdom munition output of Britain's industry was trebled during the three years, 1940-43, and this result was achieved with half the quantity of raw materials normally imported.

Where is India in this record of global war-time production ?

The general reaction of the Indian industrialists during the six years of the war was one of utter helplessness and despair. They built up great hopes and thought that the exigency of the war—if nothing else—would at last force the unwilling hands of the Government to abandon the step-motherly attitude which they had so far adopted towards Indian industrial aspirations. But subsequent events shattered their hopes and they were firmly convinced that only a real National Government was the ultimate remedy. No doubt, war had brought them huge profits but that was not and could not be the sole and permanent objective of our industrialists—at least those who are imbued with patriotic motives. India, they realize, is a land of ancient civilization and of enormous natural wealth, human and material ; if all the resources of modern science and technology are applied, in agriculture, health, industry and communications, a decent civilized life is possible for all her 400 millions. We have heard a lot of China, Russia, and other great powers in this war. India has the heart and Indians have the brain to do the job as well as others. All that is necessary is to wrest real and effective political power from our foreign masters.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE FOURTH ESTATE

The second World War has taught us in India one vital lesson afresh, namely, the peculiar inconsistency in the moral behaviour of Great Britain. We have had occasions to refer frequently to this inconsistency in the preceding pages. We have seen how Britain waged this war in the name of democracy, and how, in the West, true to this profession, she liberated many countries overrun by Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy. And yet in her own Indian Empire she followed the discredited policy of perpetuating her autocracy and domination. Britain is a signatory to the famous Atlantic Charter, which held out the bright promise of complete independence to all nations which had been trampled under the jackboot of Nazism and Fascism; and yet she flatly repudiated her obligation to apply this same Charter in India and Burma, which had been groaning under British Imperialism for nearly two centuries. And the pity of it all was that the American President, the author of the much-vaunted Four Freedoms, silently acquiesced in this strange inconsistency.

In his historic speech of January 6, 1941, President Roosevelt, defining his Four Freedoms, said: 'First is freedom of speech and expression—*Everywhere in the World.*' His valued and trusted ally, Britain, however, showed scant regard for this noble sentiment so far as India was concerned. This would be evident from a study of the history of the Fourth Estate in India during the second World War. A violent negation of the prin-

ciple enunciated by the American President characterized the attitude of the Government towards the Indian Press. President Roosevelt, making that memorable declaration at a time when the global conflict was in full blast, must have weighed the special wartime exigencies which necessitated certain essential restrictions in every sphere of life. And yet he considered freedom of speech and expression essential to a democratic world. But what was reckoned vital in democratic America or England was denied in India in the name of war. Restrictions of a very rigid type were imposed on the Indian Press on the pretext of military security, and whatever the Indian Press might try to do, it saw the Damocles' sword of the Government bans hanging over its head. It groaned under the pressure, but organized its full resources and gallantly fought a battle with the Government. In some cases it did succeed, but a spirit of suspicion and distrust governed the Government's attitude towards the Press throughout the war. Consequently fetters after fetters were forged on the Press and the elementary right of expression which the American President considered the first of his Four Freedoms was drastically curtailed.

For about a year after the outbreak of war the conditions governing the Indian Press remained more or less satisfactory. A sudden change, however, came over the situation in October, 1940, when the Indian National Congress announced its decision to launch individual civil disobedience under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi in order to vindicate the right of Indians to speak their mind freely about the war. Government thought that it could no longer allow freedom of speech and expression, especially when such liberty was likely to be exercised in preaching against the very war for which the authorities were mobilizing all India's resources ; and once the signal

for individual civil disobedience was given, an overwhelming number of nationalist newspapers in India would voluntarily extend publicity to the movement and its daily progress.

The Government of India, therefore, issued a notification under the Defence of India Rules on October 26, 1940, 'prohibiting the printing or publishing by any printer, publisher or editor in British India of any matter calculated, directly or indirectly, to foment opposition to the prosecution of the war to a successful conclusion, or of any matter relating to the holding of meetings or the making of speeches for the purpose, directly or indirectly, of fomenting such opposition as aforesaid.' The only exception to this all-embracing ban was 'any matter communicated by the Central Government or a Provincial Government to the Press for publication.'

This brought a hornet's nest about its ears. Since the declaration of war law-abiding newspaper editors had scrupulously avoided all matters that might, directly or indirectly, embarrass Government's war efforts. In fact, their handsome publicity had helped Government considerably. Instead of expressing appreciation of this gesture, Government evinced acute distrust and tried to dictate to them in the manner envisaged in the Government order. This was more than the newspaper editors could tolerate. As Mr K. Srinivasan, editor of the *Hindu* of Madras—the first President of the All-India Newspaper Editors' Conference, said, the Order, if allowed to be enforced, would reduce the position of an editor to that of an inanimate automaton, publishing only what the authorities chose and scrupulously rejecting what did not conform to their whims and caprices. No self-respecting editor could submit to such Draconian restrictions. In order, therefore, to safeguard their fundamental interests

and preserve the best traditions of the Fourth Estate, Indian editors, assembled in New Delhi under the leadership of Mr Srinivasan and formed a well-knit organization called The All-India Newspaper Editors' Conference. The primary objects of this conference were :

(*a*) To preserve the high traditions and standards of journalism ;

(*b*) to safeguard the rights of the Press in general and in particular the freedom of publication of news and comment ;

(*c*) to secure facilities and privileges to the Press for the due discharge of its responsibilities ;

(*d*) to represent the Press in India in its relations with the public and public institutions, and particularly in its relations with Government, and to set up Committees which would act as liaison bodies between the Government and the Press as a whole ; and

(*e*) to establish and develop contacts with associations having similar objects in other countries.

This was a landmark in the history of Indian journalism. The editors in India were well-known for their divergent affiliations and policies. There were papers strongly advocating the Congress case ; there were also papers propagating the Muslim League policy ; there were the Hindu Mahasabha and other party organs too. There were, besides, the Anglo-Indian dailies, notorious for their consistent pro-Government policy, which papers could be safely relied upon, whatever happened in the country, to extend their whole-hearted support to the administration. To bring these heterogeneous groups on one common platform required Herculean efforts. Yet it was accomplished in the face of a common crisis. For the first time in 175 years of its chequered history, the Indian Press stood

completely united under one banner—that of the A. I. N. E. C. Mr Srinivasan referred to this unity in his presidential address at the first conference, which met in New Delhi on November 10, 1940. 'We in India,' he said, 'are painfully aware of the many differences in the political sphere. But I am glad to feel that in regard to the liberties of the Press, differences of outlook or opinion are not likely to divide us.'

At the first meeting of the Editors' Conference, Mr Srinivasan gave a fitting reply to Government's insinuation that the Indian nationalist newspapers were being exploited by political leaders for the consummation of their objective, namely, the success of the Satyagraha movement. He said :

'A little retrospection on the part of the authorities would have shown that it is they themselves who are attempting to exploit the newspapers to help them to control the political movement in the name of efforts to win the war ... We must make it plain that we cannot, and will not, be parties to the suppression of all normal political activity in the name of the war.'

In fact, the Press, in spite of differences of political opinions, never did anything that, by the wildest stretch of imagination, could be construed as an attempt to impede the war efforts. It had, on the other hand, lent its powerful support to the Government in the successful prosecution of the war. Reports of British victories were featured by the Indian Press, the material cabled out by the Ministry of Information was given full publicity and editorial comments on the war were strongly anti-Axis. Mr Srinivasan made this point clear. He said :

'We have, all of us, without a word of dissent, helped the Government in their propaganda for their war effort in all possible ways, and have allowed our columns to be

devoted to the publication of reports of speeches and of long statements by officials and non-officials aimed at promoting the vigorous prosecution of the war. We have gone further in permitting a generous use of space in our advertisement columns, often without payment, and in some cases at concession rates. Those services, in the difficult circumstances brought on by the rapid rise in the price of newsprint and the serious curtailment of the size of our papers, ought to have served as sufficient indication of our good faith even in the present trying circumstances.'

Government regarded Satyagraha purely as an anti-war movement and, therefore, the publication of news of the campaign or of statements made by those who courted arrest in pursuance of it was deemed to be injurious to the war efforts. The nationalist Press as a whole made it clear that it had no desire to impede the war efforts, but that at the same time, it could not permit itself to be exploited for the suppression of the political movement for India's freedom. There had been clear proofs of the anxiety of the Press as a whole to maintain its independence of judgement and impartiality of outlook. The Indian Press could not, therefore, accept Government's interpretation that the Satyagraha campaign was intended solely to obstruct the war efforts. They were unanimous in this opinion.

This remarkable unity in the ranks of Indian editors caused a flutter in the Imperial citadel of New Delhi. Government realized the gravity of the situation when they saw even the Anglo-Indian dailies, on whom they had always banked for support of their bureaucratic policy, slipping away from their grasp. The united front presented by the Press compelled Government to retrieve the blunder they had committed. They got

in touch with the Editors' Conference and expressed their willingness to withdraw their obnoxious October Order and accept the suggestion of the conference that a small advisory committee of Press representatives resident in Delhi be set up to advise Government on any matters affecting the Press and in regard to any action Government might take against newspapers. Government would also recommend to Provincial Governments the constitution of similar advisory committees in the Provinces. They further agreed to follow the British example of voluntary censorship under which whatever restrictions were necessary in the interests of the war were to be laid down by Government in consultation with the representatives of the Press.

This climbing down on the part of the authorities saved the situation. The Editors' Conference welcomed the change in the Government attitude and pointed out that, even from their own point of view, the results they sought were best achieved by a policy of trust and co-operation instead of minatory directions.

This settlement between the Government of India on the one hand and the Indian Press on the other came to be known as the Delhi Agreement.

With the first victory of the Indian Press over the Government at the Centre, the crisis was over, at least for the time being. Soon after the Delhi Conference, Provincial Press Advisory Committees were formed in Bombay, Madras, Bengal and Assam, Bihar, the Central Provinces, Sind and the United Provinces, as also the Central Press Advisory Committee at New Delhi. Meanwhile, the Satyagraha movement had been going on unabated. As the movement progressed, the authorities, particularly in the Provinces, became increasingly rigid in their attitude. Almost every message about the

movement had to be referred to the Provincial Press Adviser. Some of these 'Advisers' were so raw and inexperienced in respect of their job that they used their blue pencils indiscriminately and sometimes whimsically. They would even object to the words 'Member of the Congress Working Committee' being appended to the name of Mr Achyut Patwardhan, who was arrested during the movement. When I brought this matter to the notice of the Home Secretary to the Bombay Government, their Chief Provincial Press Adviser, at the periodical Secretariat Press Conference, there was no satisfactory reply forthcoming excepting the pious assurance that he would undertake to investigate the matter. The Special Press Advisor concerned naturally felt much embarrassed at my revelation of the way in which 'advice' was being tendered to the Press. After the conference, he came to me with the whispered request that I should in future bring all doubtful 'press-advised' messages to his notice, instead of drawing the attention of his Chief at the Press Conference, so that after a friendly discussion, 'press-advising' of our messages might be amicably settled. I was amused at this suggestion, but I respected his wishes and, in fairness to him, I must say that in nine out of ten cases where he had originally objected to messages, he submitted to my decision.

In spite of all these curious incidents, our experiences in Bombay were, on the whole, fairly happy, for the Government of Bombay did, from the very beginning, except for the solitary aberration when they took drastic and unwarranted steps against the *Bombay Sentinel*, act in the true spirit of the Delhi Agreement. Similar good reports also came from one or two other Provinces. But in others the Delhi Agreement was honoured more in the breach than in the observance. The situation was worst

in the United Provinces where the administration was at the mercy of that sun-dried bureaucrat, Sir Maurice Hallett. There the frequent appeals by the Editors' Conference for a policy of trust and co-operation, were treated with contempt ; the machinery for consultation set up in accordance with the Delhi Agreement was considered a nuisance and ignored. While lip sympathy was paid to the objects which the consultative machinery was intended to serve, Government deliberately tried to undermine its utility. In the words of Mr Syed Abdulla Brelvi, the second President of the Editors' Conference, the attitude of the Government of the United Provinces towards the Press was 'most reactionary and hostile'. And the Central Government, who were a party to the Gentleman's Agreement did not carry out their part of the bargain by securing an improvement in the attitude of recalcitrant Provincial Governments. Nor was the conduct of the Government of India themselves in this matter always unexceptionable. 'On several occasions their attitude was such as would have wrecked the Agreement, but for the firm and united front presented by the Standing Committee of the Editors' Conference,' said Mr Brelvi, dealing with the working of the Delhi Agreement by the Central Government.

This attitude of the Central Government encouraged the Provinces to treat their respective Press Advisory Committees with ill-concealed hostility. In the United Provinces, the recommendations of the Provincial Committee were mostly flouted, and action was frequently taken against newspapers and printing presses without previous consultation with the committee. Repeated appeals from the Editors' Conference went unheeded. The U. P. Government bared their fangs when they issued drastic orders against the *National Herald* of Lucknow,

of which Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was Chairman, and the *Sainik* of Agra, demanding securities of Rs. 6,000 from each of these papers although they had committed no offence to warrant such a heavy penalty. A promise had been given by the U.P. Government to the Press Advisory Committee earlier 'to write on a clean slate,' but this was not redeemed. When all representations by the Editors' Conference had failed to evoke a satisfactory response, the Conference decided to send a goodwill mission to the Province to meet Sir Maurice Hallett and members of the Government to explain the whole position and establish good relations between the Government and the Press on a proper and permanent basis. But this attempt also proved abortive, and the only impression that the two members of the mission, Sir Francis Low, Editor of the *Times of India*, Bombay, and Mr C. R. Srinivasan, Editor of the *Swadeshmitran*, Madras, gathered was that the attitude of the U.P. Government was one of 'passive hostility'. When the Standing Committee of the Editors' Conference met in Calcutta in October, 1941, the President was requested to take such further action in the matter as he considered necessary. The President's attempt to persuade the U.P. Government to take a reasonable view of the matter and to give the Delhi Agreement a fair trial also proved fruitless. Even the suggestion to enlarge the Committee was futile as the Government did not accept the names of additional members recommended by the President, though in most provinces, the members of the Committee were elected representatives of the Press.

This was not the whole of the story of repression. The Government made matters worse by suppressing the *Sainik* altogether without consulting the Provincial Committee. Another appeal was issued by the Conference,

then in session at Delhi, and the reply of the U.P. Government was the forfeiture of the *National Herald's* security of Rs. 6,000 and a demand for a fresh security of Rs. 1,200. All this was done without the knowledge of the Provincial Committee. This was a clear breach not only of the Gentleman's Agreement reached at Delhi, but also of the specific assurances given by the United Provinces Government themselves, when the Provincial Committee began functioning, that securities would not be demanded from newspapers without the Committee being previously consulted, and that in all cases where Government thought action was necessary, they would convene an emergency meeting on the Committee composed of members resident in Lucknow when a general meeting was not possible.

In January, 1941, owing to what Government regarded as the non-observance of the Delhi Agreement by certain newspapers, they proposed to issue further restrictions regarding matters relating to the Satyagraha movement. The main trouble appeared to be in regard to the publication of statements issued by Mahatma Gandhi, the leader of the movement. In a memorandum submitted by the Central Press Advisory Committee to the Chief Press Adviser on January 17, 1941, the Indian Press clarified its attitude to the statements of Gandhiji. The memorandum stated that the nationalist Press, as a whole, followed the policy enunciated by Mr Srinivasan, in his presidential address to the Editors' Conference in November; it had no desire to impede the war efforts, nor could it permit itself to be exploited for the suppression of the political movement for India's independence. Apart from all this, editors could not overlook one personal factor; there were wild rumours current of an impending fast by Mahatma Gandhi;

that it had only been held long in abeyance and had not been abandoned. It was conceivable that if Government should continue to suppress his statements (three out of four issued in the previous three weeks had been suppressed), he might take the view that life in such circumstances would not be worth living. Indian papers, quite frankly, would not accept any responsibility for such a decision. The memorandum further went on :

'In the situation which is developing, the nationalist papers feel entitled to regard Gandhiji's statements as exceptional and cannot fairly be expected to become willing parties to their suppression. It must be borne in mind that they are not bound to refer everything to Press Advisers, nor is there any obligation on their part to accept their advice. It is open to an editor to say : 'I have accepted the advice of the Press Adviser in nine cases out of ten ; but in the tenth, the advice tendered is unsound, and therefore, I shall take the risk of publication.' Every editor knows what that risk is in the existing circumstances. Government should not regard acceptance of press-advising as a matter of course. No editor can, or will, allow his judgment to be subordinated to that of an outside authority. That would mean the imposition of rigid censorship, not the offer of press advice.

The memorandum further added :

'On occasions (which are not frequent) and particularly in regard to Gandhiji's statements the nationalist Press will want to exercise a certain amount of latitude. Policies have been shaped by a balancing of factors of advantage and disadvantage. That should be done also in regard to newspapers which, so far as the war is concerned, have rendered, are rendering and may be expected to continue to render, invaluable help to the British

cause.'

Government's contention in regard to the breach of the Delhi Agreement by the Provinces was that a section of the Press had repudiated that Agreement and 'must, therefore, be presumed to intend, or at least to desire, to publish matter calculated, in the opinion of Government, to impede the prosecution of the war'. They observed that while the Agreement had been generally honoured, some newspapers of standing had published, without press advice, statements made by important Satyagrahis in court which clearly amounted to 'prejudicial reports' and had given undue advertisement to the Satyagraha movement by publishing the intention of comparatively obscure persons, whose activities could possess little real news value in themselves, to offer Satyagraha at specified times and places. 'Neither the Government of India, nor the Government of any country engaged in a life-and-death struggle with a foreign Power can permit anything that will prejudice the successful conduct of the war,' they argued. Mr Desmond Young, the Chief Press Adviser, made it clear to the editors that Government could not agree to the Press 'being used as a medium for the conveyance of orders and instructions regarding the future conduct of the Satyagraha movement, thus relieving those in charge of it of the necessity of communicating such orders and instructions privately. Nor can they agree to the publication of news which, though factual, is given at greater length and with more prominence than its actual news value to any section of readers justifies and thus assists the movement by advertising its progress.'

As regards statements by Mahatma Gandhi, Mr Young said that 'Government have no desire to suppress them unless they are calculated to impede the prosecu-

tion of the war or to provide the enemy with propaganda material, and will certainly give them special consideration, in view of the respect in which Mahatma Gandhi is held in India and the interest which attaches to anything he writes ... But successful prosecution of the war must, however, be their first consideration, and they must remain the final judges of what is likely to impede or promote it.'

Government, however, accepted the editors' request not ordinarily to ban publication of statements issued by Mahatma Gandhi and in cases where they were inclined to take such a step, they should consult the Central Press Advisory Committee before passing any orders thereon. They said that this suggestion could be followed in the case of formal statements by Mahatma Gandhi issued through the news agencies and not sent to editors direct, and that only by this means could equal treatment for all newspapers be ensured.

The individual Satyagraha movement came to a conclusion by the end of 1941 when the Government of India suddenly announced their decision on December 3 that all Satyagrahi prisoners whose offence had been informal and symbolic would be released forthwith. And with the conclusion of the movement, there was no further occasion for a clash between the Indian Press and the Government.

CHAPTER XXV

THE LIMIT

In the beginning of 1942 the war in the Far East took a very grave turn. Singapore, Malaya and Burma fell to the Japanese aggressor in quick succession, and the serious Allied reverses in the Eastern theatre of war created a considerable sense of defeatism in the minds of the people of India about the ultimate issue of this global conflict. A section of the Press so featured day-to-day events on the various fronts that Government thought that unless certain restrictions were imposed, it might help to aggravate this defeatist mentality and ultimately shatter the morale of the people. They, therefore, appeared once again on the scene and trotted out the charge that a certain section of the Press was taking the most pessimistic view of the war. In a memorandum to the President of the Editors' Conference in February, 1942, Government alleged that 'not only is great prominence given to enemy success and Allied reverses—a practice which is defended on the ground that it is the duty of newspapers to give precedence to the most outstanding news of the day—but editorial comment tends to enlarge upon the power of the enemy, the apparent inability of the Allies to check his advance in the Far East, and the dangers of the situation, particularly to India.'

The memorandum further stated that although in ordinary times Government might not object to a very large amount of political criticism, they were compelled to do so now because the times were too serious and be-

cause 'it is their duty, as it is the duty of every Government worth the name, to take every possible step to combat defeatism and strengthen the resolution of the people.'

To this the President of the Editors' Conference replied, saying that 'it is not at all necessary for Government to interfere in the conduct of newspapers to the extent of dictating to the Press as to how news should be featured.' 'I would certainly deprecate Government attempting to do anything with the Press in India which is not in conformity with the conventions observed by His Majesty's Government in their relations with the British Press,' the President emphatically averred.

As regards the writings in Indian newspapers on the political issue, the President said that the attitude of the Press had been critical because 'we feel that very much greater and more effective co-operation from the people could be got only by a satisfactory solution of the Indian deadlock'.

There was a change in the political situation in the country in the following months when it was announced that Sir Stafford Cripps would be coming to India to help to end the Indian deadlock. We have seen how the Lord Privy Seal came and went, how the political situation took a turn only for the worse, and the Indian National Congress ultimately adopted the 'Quit India' resolution. Government's attitude towards the Press underwent a radical change after the adoption by the Congress of the 'Quit India' resolution on August 8, 1942. On the very day that much-maligned resolution was passed in Bombay, the Central Government issued an order 'prohibiting the printing or publishing by any printer, publisher or editor of any factual news (which expression shall be deemed to include reports of speeches or statements made by members

of the public) relating to the mass movement sanctioned by the All-India Congress Committee or to the measures taken by the Government against that movement, except news derived from, and stated in the newspaper which publishes it to be derived from, (*a*) official sources, or (*b*) the Associated Press of India, the United Press of India or the Orient Press of India, or (*c*) a correspondent regularly employed by the newspaper concerned and whose name stands registered with the District Magistrate of the district in which he carries on his work.'

Meanwhile, following the arrest of Mahatma Gandhi and other Congress leaders, widespread disturbances occurred in every nook and corner of the country. In such a situation, a greater and heavier responsibility lay on the Indian Press. The Government order, therefore, came as a bolt from the blue. Of course, the Indian Press had seldom in its chequered history been free from irksome restrictions. The war had so intensified these restrictions that the publication of newspapers had become a most trying job. Yet the Press had carried on gallantly, struggling to find its way through the maze of restrictions imposed under the Defence of India Rules. But the order issued by the Central Government on August 8, 1942, prohibiting publication of even factual news relating to the mass movement sanctioned by the A.I.C.C. or, strangely enough, even to the measures taken by Government against that movement, except news derived from official sources or accredited news agencies or registered correspondents, created an impossible situation. This order practically robbed the Press of all its essential rights and privileges. It was then that nationalist newspapers felt that they could not with self-respect discharge their responsibilities to the public. The rule regarding the compulsory registration of Press correspon-

dents was unprecedented and most irksome. It was a rule that placed in the hands of district magistrates a new power—the power to dis-register. They were not slow to take advantage of it. In a number of centres they started requiring correspondents to submit copy for approval before it could be passed on to their respective newspapers for publication. News was thus tainted at the very source with bureaucratic direction ; and a heavy and unbearable strain was placed on editorial integrity. In such circumstances, a number of nationalist newspapers in Calcutta, rather than endure such a servile existence, chose the more honourable alternative—they suspended publication as a protest against the Government order.

This Calcutta example was promptly followed by other papers that had been experiencing the same difficulty, and as many as ninety newspapers all over India had closed down within the brief span of a month after the promulgation of the order. A conference of the representatives of all the newspapers that had suspended publication was held in Bombay mainly on the initiative of Mr Samaldas Gandhi, the firebrand Editor of the *Vandemataram*, to chalk out their future programme. This large-scale suspension of newspapers was the first of its kind in history even as the 'Quit India' resolution was. The papers were goaded to this extremity. 'We can ill afford to be silent,' said Mr Ramnath Goenka, who presided over the Bombay Conference, 'when atrocities in the name of law and order are permitted under our very eyes, nor can we, in the discharge of our legitimate duties, accord allegiance to the rule prohibiting all reference to measures taken from time to time by Government for dealing with the present movement.'

'We have ceased publication,' said Mr Samaldas Gandhi in his opening speech, 'not because we want to

add to the various black-outs that darken our horizon, not because the business part of our patriotic profession was threatened by the gloom of depression, and also not because of our sudden desire to enjoy the costliest leisure we could ever afford to dream of. We have suspended our voice because the vibrations came to be ruthlessly paralysed. As the givers of news we were suddenly faced with a number of "Don'ts". We preferred a sort of semi-death in order to keep alive the glory of our sacred task.'

Another incident added to the gravity of the situation. During the August disturbances, severe repression was let loose in Asthi and Chimur, in the Central Provinces. The Chimur episode created a first class sensation in the country. Prof. Bhansali, an inmate of Gandhiji's Sevagram Ashram, urged an inquiry into the Chimur affair, failing which he announced his intention to undertake a fast unto death. As there was no response from Government, Prof. Bhansali started his fast.

The *Free Press Journal* gave the following vivid description of the situation :

Alarmed at the manner in which this momentous fast was agitating the public mind, the C.P. Government decided that further mischief could be prevented only by gagging the Press. They sounded the C.P. Press Advisory Committee as to whether newspapers in the province would agree to deny all publicity to the fast. But as the Press was not willing to relinquish its duty, the C.P. Government, on December 12, issued the following order under Rule 41 of the Defence of India Rules :

In exercise of powers conferred by clause (*b*) of sub-rule (i) of Rule 41 of the Defence of India Rules, the Government of the Central Provinces is pleased to order that :

(1) No printer, publisher or editor shall make, print or publish in the Central Provinces any document or any matter relating directly or indirectly to

(*a*) Prof. Bhansali of Sevagram or his activities;

(*b*) this order or any reference whatever to this order; and

(2) No Press in the Central Provinces shall be used for the printing of any such document or matter.

The Central Provinces Government circulated their order to the other Provinces and solicited their co-operation in blacking out the fast. The Government of India endorsed the request of the Central Provinces.

On December 15, the Government of Bombay summoned an emergency meeting of the Press Advisory Committee and explained the position to them. The Committee refused to agree to the black-out. That evening the Bombay Government issued an order similar to the C.P. one.

On December 15, the Press Advisory Committee summoned an urgent meeting of all Bombay Editors to protest against this order. The meeting asked for the immediate withdrawal of the order and as a mark of protest against the gagging order suggested a one-day *hartal*. The daily Press in Bombay City and Province, with the solitary exception of the *Times of India*, suspended publication on December 18, without disclosing the reason.

Further action was left to the Standing Committee of the All-India Newspaper Editors' Conference that was meeting that day.

The Standing Committee of the A.I.N.E.C., meet-

ing in Bombay on December 18, 19 and 21, passed the following resolution :

'As a protest against a recent order passed by certain Provincial Governments, involving a flagrant breach of the agreement reached with the All-India Newspaper Editors' Conference, the Standing Committee of the A.I.N.E.C. recommends to all newspapers in India to suspend publication for a day to be fixed and announced by the President.

'It also recommends to them not to publish until the order is withdrawn or otherwise directed by the President :

(i) all circulars from Government Houses ;
(ii) New Year Honours List ; and
(iii) all speeches of members of the British Government, the Government of India and Provincial Governments except portions thereof which contain decisions and announcements.'

The circumstances which led to this decision were stated in a private circular which Mr J. N. Sahni, Secretary of the A.I.N.E.C., sent to all newspapers in India. Mr Sahni said :

'Editors in certain provinces may not probably be aware of the circumstances which necessitated this decision. You perhaps know by now that Prof. Bhansali has been on a fast at Wardha for the last 39 days. His demand is that an impartial inquiry be held into the incidents at Chimur, in the Central Provinces, where it is alleged serious excesses were committed, including outrages on women. The Government of the Central Provinces issued an order on all newspapers in the Central Provinces forbidding them to publish any reports about Prof. Bhansali or his fast and a further order that no reference should be made by the papers to the order for-

bidding publication of news about Prof. Bhansali and his fast. So far as the Standing Committee was aware, similar orders were passed on papers in Bombay and Madras and were likely to be enforced in other provinces as well.

'The Standing Committee, at its meeting on Saturday, passed a resolution requesting Government to withdraw both these orders, since they were contrary to the spirit of the Bombay understanding. The Standing Committee agreed to wait till Monday for Government to take its decision. The reply of Government on Monday was very discouraging. The Standing Committee consequently, passed the above resolution on Monday.

'As you will see, the two orders mentioned above are not only a flagrant breach of the understanding between Government and the Editors' Conference, but are also in violation of journalistic integrity. It is hence that the Standing Committee unanimously decided on this unprecedented form of protest.

'You will know from the Press the date for the one-day suspension which will be announced by the President. The Standing Committee expects that newspapers throughout the country will co-operate in putting into full operation the terms of the resolution and will stand united irrespective of political views in defending the rights of the Press.'

Either through orders under the Defence of India Rules or through strict press advice, Government had succeeded in blacking out all news about the fast in all provinces. In the protracted negotiations that were conducted, the Provincial Governments pointed at the Central Government as being responsible for the order, and the Central Government said the matter lay with the Provincial Governments. When the negotiations finally failed

to move Government, Mr K. Srinivasan, President of the A.I.N.E.C., made the following announcement on December 30, 1942 :

'In accordance with the resolution of the Standing Committee of the A.I.N.E.C., passed at its meetings held in Bombay on the 18th, 19th and 21st December, I have fixed January 6, 1943, for the observance of the hartal throughout India for a day. It is requested that managements abstain from publishing newspapers bearing that date. The co-operation of all newspapers in India is solicited to make the day of protest a success.

'The second part of the resolution will take effect from the 1st of January, 1943, and continue in force until further notice.

'I am reluctantly compelled to give effect to this resolution as all efforts during the past week to persuade the Government of India to intervene have proved futile.'

On January 1, the Honours List was blacked out. Over a hundred leading newspapers responded to the call for the one-day hartal. And from January 1, 1943, the black-out of Government news came into force. The Anglo-Indian newspapers failed to implement the recommendations of the Standing Committee.

Angered by the action of the Press, the Madras Government withdrew all Press privileges from the offending papers and also instructed Government departments not to advertise in them.

On hearing of the withdrawal of the ban by the Government of the C.P., Mr Srinivasan issued the following announcement dated January 13, withdrawing the protest measure adopted by the Press :

'With the withdrawal by the C.P. Government of the order issued by them under the Defence of India Rules dated December 12, 1942, which led to the bann-

ing of publication all over India of news relating to Prof. Bhansali or his fast or even any reference to the order, and the announcement of a settlement between Prof. Bhansali and the C.P. Government in regard to his demand for an inquiry into the Chimur incidents, I consider that it is no longer necessary to keep in force the ban recommended by the Standing Committee of the A.I.N.E.C. in their resolution passed at Bombay on December 21, 1942. The resolution was a protest against the flagrant breach, which the C.P. Government's order involved of the agreement subsisting between the Government of India and the Press.

'In accordance with the direction given in the resolution, I announce that the recommendations made therein, imposing a ban on certain categories of news, now cease to be operative.'

On the same day the Madras Government decided to restore to reporters of certain newspapers in the city the facilities to go over to the Secretariat to receive copies of Press *Communiques* and other materials officially released to the Press which had been suspended since January 3.

When the Mahatma undertook his 21 days' fast in the Aga Khan's Palace on February 10, 1943, the Indian Press was asked not to publish a line about the condition of his health except the official medical bulletin issued by the Bombay Government. The cryptic *communiques* conveyed nothing to the world about the real condition of Gandhiji's health, but in the circumstances then prevailing, people had to be satisfied with them.

As regards outgoing and incoming news a rigid censorship was imposed in the name of military security. As a matter of fact, the censoring of news going out from India was heavier. This was due to the anxiety of Govern-

ment to suppress real facts about India. Not only did the military censors cut down 'strong' words from incoming press messages, but they exercised a strict vigil in respect of every outgoing cable. They distorted or deleted passages which were embarrassing to them and in some cases resorted to total suppression. What was worse, neither the correspondents, nor the newspapers, were intimated if and when any statement or news was withheld or portion of such statement or news excised by the military censor. I might mention here only one typical instance which will show the way and working of press censorship in India during the war.

Towards the end of 1943, the London office of the United Press of India sent a cable to its Bombay office containing two interviews with two leading members of the British Parliament on the Indian situation. This cable was suppressed by the Indian Censor under instructions from the Government of India. When the London office got to know of this suppression, it communicated the matter to the two M.P.'s concerned, who in their turn walked into the India Office and brought it to the notice of the Secretary of State for India. Mr Amery promised an investigation and subsequently got in touch with the Government of India. What transpired between the India Office and New Delhi is not known, but the United Press of India later received a communication from the Government of India tendering a handsome apology for the suppression of its London cable and also offering compensation for any financial loss that might have been caused by such action.

This unwarranted interference with a message that had been passed for publication by the British Ministry of Information clearly showed that Government were anxious to keep the outside world completely in the dark

about what was happening in India. With the same object in view Government imposed a ban on the export of Indian newspapers to Allied and neutral countries during the war, as many as 188 Indian newspapers and journals being affected by this order.

Similarly, interviews with persons on arrival in India by sea or by air were not to be published unless passed for publication by a Press Adviser. When a number of American journalists came to India during the war, a news agency sent out the story from Karachi without, of course, disclosing the name of the ship by which they had travelled or the place whence they had arrived ; but the Public Relations Officer took exception to the item and had it contradicted immediately. This was the wartime censorship in India—it meant that the agreement with the editors that they could publish anything at their own risk had practically no meaning.

The one-day suspension of Indian newspapers as an effective protest against Government restrictions on the Press and the black-out of official news in themselves constitute a chapter in history. Restrictions there had always been on the Indian Press since the advent of British rule in the country, but never before had there been such an open revolt on the part of the Press against Government as in the latter part of 1942 and the early part of 1943. When the history of these eventful times comes to be written, the heroic role played by the Indian Press in the most trying days of the second World War in defence of its traditional rights and privileges and in support of the nationwide plea for Indian independence will remain written in letters of gold.

EPILOGUE

The pages that have gone before have, in a fashion traced the history of what I choose to call 'Blood and Tears' shed by my countrymen during the six eventful years of the second Great World War. They have depicted the innumerable sufferings and hardships borne by the people of India. They have drawn the grim picture of how the whole fabric of the Indian Empire was rudely shaken during the nightmare period, how hundreds of thousands of Indians gallantly sacrificed their lives in the various theatres of war—in the Near, Middle and Far East and on the distant Italian and German territories. In India itself, millions of other helpless and unfortunate people entreated in vain for a morsel of food until the all-soothing hand of Death silenced their cry of distress and dried the tears on their famished cheeks. Meanwhile, the ruthless process of moral and material ruination of the masses went on merrily.

The war came to an end with the signing of the Armistice in Tokyo on September 2, 1945, six years almost to a day after the outbreak of hostilities in Europe. But its termination has not seen India free, notwithstanding the fond hopes of many an incorrigible optimist both in this country and abroad. What is more, the war laid an unhappy blight on our fair country, which has not yet been lifted. Poverty and hunger still stalk the land; people have not yet recovered from the upheavals of the war years.

In Britain, the end of the European War heralded the fall of the Churchill Government. It toppled at the first blast of the new currents sweeping the world, and a

Labour Government was installed in its place. Hopes sprang up once again that these Labour leaders, who had advocated the cause of India's freedom in the past would do something real and substantial towards the consummation of our long-cherished aspirations. But with the acceptance of office, Labour quietly dropped its slogan of liberty for subject nations. The new Government adopted a policy in regard to India that even a die-hard Government would envy.

The most aggressive demonstration of the Churchillian policy of the Labour Government in Britain and its representatives in India has been their insistence on putting the men and officers of the Indian National Army up for trial. After all, who are these soldiers of the Indian National Army? They are the sons of the Indian soil and their only crime is that they loved their motherland and sought foreign help to free her from an alien domination. History teaches us that it is the sacred duty of people under the heel of an alien ruler to muster all help possible, even external if necessary, and overthrow the oppressor. What these brave soldiers of the I. N. A. did was in line with all the glorious traditions of history. Look at the Western Powers. Did not the patriots of Italy, Greece, Czechoslovakia welcome outside help to rid themselves of the foreign yoke? These are rightly held up as shining examples. Why then this discrimination in the case of soldiers of the Indian National Army who sought foreign help and fought courageously for their motherland?

One thing the I. N. A. episode has done—British hypocrisy stands fully unmasked before the world today. It has been the British Government's parrot-cry that they would not delay the independence of India even by a day if she presented a united demand. Yet in the face of the

unanimous demand from every section of Indian opinion for a general amnesty, they have not hesitated to put the members of the Indian National Army up for trial! These brave sons of India, who were prepared to lay down their lives in the cause of their country's freedom, have no place in their motherland—in an India in bondage. We were told by the Viceroy to adopt the attitude of 'forget and forgive'. But he forgets this pious sentiment himself and insists on the I. N. A. trials, on the plea that the course of justice should not be delayed or obstructed. Where is the sense of justice, one would ask His Excellency, on the part of those who insist on trying men who are regarded as great patriots by their own kith and kin? General Auchinleck, the British Commander-in-Chief of India, today talks glibly of the complete Indianization of the Army. Is this the right way to set about it? Could not Government have summoned I. N. A. personnel to form the nucleus of the new Indian Army?

The mightiest holocaust in history has ended; but the anguished cry of oppressed and suppressed peoples all over the world has not been stilled. What does the future hold for the world? What is India's destiny? The first World War was fought to the bitter end and when the Peace Treaty came to be signed at Versailles great hopes were aroused. But the 'peace' that followed failed, as Mr Wendell Willkie puts it, 'primarily because no joint objectives upon which it could be based had been arrived at in the minds of the people.' According to him, the League of Nations was created full-blown; and men and women, having developed no joint purpose, except to defeat a common enemy, fell into capricious arguments about its structure. It failed likewise, because it was primarily an Anglo-French-American solution, retaining the old colonial imperialism under new and fancy

labels. It did not take adequate account of the pressing needs of the Far East, neither did it earnestly seek a solution of the pressing economic problems of the world.

India has just passed through the darkest days of her political servitude in another Great War, certainly of vaster dimensions, and fraught with graver issues that still remain to be restored. What shall be our plan of action? Foreign rule has retarded all national progress in India, despite the opportunities offered by wartime exigencies. A survey of the post-war prospect reveals one fact more clearly than anything else. It is this, that the urgent and vital problem for us today is political independence and the establishment of a democratic State. It is only in a free atmosphere that all-round national progress can be achieved—not under an alien Government, for all its platitudinous protestations. Peace and prosperity on the one hand and political servitude on the other cannot go hand in hand. In order to achieve the one, we must get rid of the other. What India badly needs today is a revolution. Experience teaches us that once liberty is lost, nothing short of a revolution will ever accomplish its return. Whether that revolution in India should be a violent one, or whether it should be based on the higher Gandhian principles of truth and non-violence is a matter of detail which can be easily settled once a decision on the bigger issue is reached.

Much has been said about communal disunity in India. Britain makes this the principal excuse to deny us freedom. But how long will this hollow pretext serve her? In which other country in the world indeed has there been no communal disharmony, and where else has independence been withheld or obstructed for this reason? Did not America, which today ranks as the world's foremost Power wade through rivers of fratricidal blood in

order to win and preserve her unity ? Did not the Roman Catholics and Protestants of England indulge in sanguinary strife for more than a century before they learnt to live together in unity ? It is small wonder then that there are communal bickerings in our own vast country.

The most heartening sign in India today is that those who have so long instigated or provoked communal discord are gradually realizing the utter futility of it all. They have now come to recognize the mysterious hand behind the scene, always ready to incite and exacerbate communal passion for ulterior motive of their own. The cream of our young intelligentsia is aligning its forces with nationalism. Common suffering arising from war, famine and floods, and the disabilities of our fellow-countrymen abroad whether in next-door Ceylon or in distant South Africa, are bringing Indians together as nothing else in the past. We have, therefore, no reason to despair of the future of Indian nationalism. India, our Motherland, is pulsating with a new and vigorous life. Men and women are on the march today. After centuries of ignorance and patient-like endurance, we have seen the royal road. Old bogeys frighten us no longer. As Mr Wendell Willkie has said, we are no longer willing to be Eastern slaves for Western profits. 'The big house on the hill surrounded by mud huts has lost its awesome charm.' The deadening grip of inertia has been lifted from our legioned ranks. The day is not far distant when the spark of freedom and responsibility will energize our people and India will hold her head high in the comity of nations. The results of the general elections that are now upon us may be the precursor of the glorious future that awaits us.

APPENDIX I

CONGRESS WORKING COMMITTEE'S STATEMENT ON WAR, SEPTEMBER 14, 1939

The Working Committee have given their earnest consideration to the grave crisis that has developed owing to the declaration of war in Europe. The principles which should guide the nation in the event of war have been repeatedly laid down by the Congress, and only a month ago this Committee reiterated them and expressed their displeasure at the flouting of Indian opinion by the British Government in India. As a first step to dissociate themselves from this policy of the British Government, the Committee called upon the Congress members of the Central Legislative Assembly to refrain from attending the session. Since then the British Government have declared India as a belligerent country, promulgated Ordinances, passed the Government of India Act Amending Bill, and taken other far-reaching measures which affect the Indian people vitally, and circumscribe and limit the powers and activities of the provincial governments. This has been done without the consent of the Indian people whose declared wishes in such matters have been deliberately ignored by the British Government. The Working Committee must take the gravest view of these developments.

The Congress has repeatedly declared its entire disapproval of the ideology and practice of Fascism and Nazism and their glorification of war and violence the suppression of the human spirit. It has condemned the aggression in which they have repeatedly indulged and their sweeping away of well-established principles and recognised standards of civilised behaviour. It has seen in Fascism and Nazism the intensification of the principle of Imperialism against which the Indian people have struggled for many years. The Working Committee must, therefore, unhesitatingly condemn the latest aggression of the Nazi Government in Germany against Poland and sympathise with those who resist it.

The Congress has further laid down that the issue of war and peace for India must be decided by the Indian people, and no outside authority can impose this decision upon them, nor can the Indian people permit their resources to be exploited for Imperialist ends. Any imposed decision, or attempt to use India's resources, for purposes not approved by them, will necessarily have to be opposed by them. If co-operation is desired in a worthy cause, this cannot be obtained by compulsion and imposition, and the Committee cannot agree to the carrying out by the Indian people of orders issued by external authority. Co-operation must be between equals by mutual consent for a cause which both consider to be worthy. The people of India have, in the recent past, faced great risks and willingly made great sacrifices to secure their own freedom and establish a free democratic state in India, and their sympathy is entirely on the side of democracy and freedom. But India cannot associate herself in a war said to be for democratic freedom when that freedom is denied to her, and such limited freedom as she possesses, taken away from her.

The Committee are aware that the Governments of Great Britain and France have declared that they are fighting for democracy and freedom and to put an end to aggression. But the history of the recent past is full of examples showing the constant divergence between the spoken word, the ideals proclaimed, and the real motives and objectives. During the war of 1914-18, the declared war aims were, preservation of democracy, self-determination, and the freedom of small nations, and yet the very governments which solemnly proclaimed these aims entered into secret treaties embodying imperialist designs for the carving up of the Ottoman Empire. While stating that they did not want any acquisition of territory, the victorious Powers added largely to their colonial domains. The present European war itself signifies the abject failure of the Treaty of Versailles and of its makers, who broke their pledged word and imposed an imperialist peace on the defeated nations. The one hopeful outcome of that Treaty, the League of Nations, was muzzled and strangled at the outset and later killed by its parent States.

Subsequent history has demonstrated afresh how even a seemingly fervent declaration of faith may be followed by an

ignoble desertion. In Manchuria the British Government connived at aggression ; in Abyssinia they acquiesced in it. In Czechoslovakia and Spain democracy was in peril and it was deliberately betrayed, and the whole system of collective security was sabotaged by the very powers who had previously declared their firm faith in it.

Again it is asserted that democracy is in danger and must be defended and with this statement the Committee are in entire agreement. The Committee believe that the peoples of the West are moved by this ideal and objective and for these they are prepared to make sacrifices. But again and again the ideals and sentiments of the people and of those who have sacrificed themselves in the struggle have been ignored and faith has not been kept with them.

If the war is to defend the 'status quo' imperialist possessions, colonies, vested interests and privileges, then India can have nothing to do with it. If, however, the issue is democracy and a world order based on democracy, then India is intensely interested in it. The Committee are convinced that the interests of Indian democracy do not conflict with the interests of British democracy or world democracy. But there is an inherent and ineradicable conflict between democracy for India or elsewhere and imperialism and fascism. If Great Britain fights for the maintenance and extension of democracy, then she must necessarily end imperialism in her own possessions, establish full democracy in India, and the Indian people must have the right of self-determination by framing their own constitution through a Constituent Assembly without external interference, and must guide her own policy. A free democratic India will gladly associate herself with other free nations for mutual defence against aggression and for economic co-operation. She will work for the establishment of a real world order based on freedom and democracy, utilising the world's knowledge and resources for the progress and advancement of humanity.

The crisis that has overtaken Europe is not of Europe only but of humanity and will not pass like other crises of war leaving the essential structure of the present-day world intact. It is likely to refashion the world for good or ill, politically, socially and economically. The crisis is the ine-

vitable consequence of the social and political conflicts and contradictions which have grown alarmingly since the last Great War, and it will not be finally resolved till these conflicts and contradictions are removed and a new equilibrium established. That equilibrium can only be based on the ending of the domination and exploitation of one country by another, and on a reorganisation of economic relations on a juster basis for the common good of all. India is the crux of the problem, for India has been the outstanding example of modern imperialism and no refashioning of the world can succeed which ignores this vital problem. With her vast resources she must play an important part in any scheme of world reorganisation. But she can only do so as a free nation whose energies have been released to work for this great end. Freedom today is indivisible and every attempt to retain imperialist domination in any part of the world will lead inevitably to fresh disaster.

The Working Committee have noted that many rulers of Indian States have offered their services and resources and expressed their desire to support the cause of democracy in Europe. If they must make their professions in favour of democracy abroad, the Committee would suggest that their first concern should be the introduction of democracy within their own states in which today undiluted autocracy reigns supreme. The British Government in India is more responsible for this autocracy than even the rulers themselves, as has been made painfully evident during the past year. This policy is the very negation of democracy and of the new world order for which Great Britain claims to be fighting in Europe.

As the Working Committee view past events in Europe, Africa and Asia, and more particularly past and present occurrences in India, they fail to find any attempt to advance the cause of democracy or self-determination or any evidence that the present war declarations of the British Government are being, or are going to be, acted upon. The true measure of democracy is the ending of imperialism and fascism alike and the aggression that has accompanied them in the past and the present. Only on that basis can a new order be built up. In the struggle for that new world order, the Committee are eager and desirous to help in every way. But the Committee

cannot associate themselves or offer any co-operation in a war which is conducted on imperialist lines and which is meant to consolidate imperialism in India and elsewhere.

In view, however, of the gravity of the occasion and the fact that the pace of events during the last few days has often been swifter than the working of men's minds, the Committee desire to take no final decision at this stage, so as to allow for the full elucidation of the issues at stake, the real objectives aimed at, and the position of India in the present and in the future. But the decision cannot long be delayed as India is being committed from day to day to a policy to which she is not a party and of which she disapproves.

The Working Committee therefore invite the British Government to declare in unequivocal terms what their war aims are in regard to democracy and imperialism and the new order that is envisaged, in particular, how these aims are going to apply to India and to be given effect to in the present. Do they include the elimination of imperialism and the treatment of India as a free nation whose policy will be guided in accordance with the wishes of her people? A clear declaration about the future, pledging the Government to the ending of Imperialism and fascism alike will be welcomed by the people of all countries, but it is far more important to give immediate effect to it, to the largest possible extent, for only this will convince the people that the declaration is meant to be honoured. The real test of any declaration is its application in the present, for it is the present that will govern action today and give shape to the future.

War has broken out in Europe and the prospect is terrible to contemplate. But war has been taking its heavy toll of human life during recent years in Abyssinia, Spain and China. Innumerable innocent men, women and children have been bombed to death from the air in open cities, cold-blooded massacres, torture and utmost humiliation have followed each other in quick succession during these years of horror. That horror grows, and violence and the threat of violence shadow the world and, unless checked and ended, will destroy the precious inheritance of past ages. That horror has to be checked in Europe and China, but it will not end till its root causes of fascism and imperialism are removed. To that end

the Working Committee are prepared to give their co-operation. But it will be infinite tragedy if even this terrible war is carried on in the spirit of imperialism and for the purpose of retaining this structure which is itself the cause of war and human degradation.

The Working Committee wish to declare that the Indian people have no quarrel with the German people or the Japanese people or any other people. But they have a deep-rooted quarrel with systems which deny freedom and are based on violence and aggression. They do not look forward to a victory of one people over another or to a dictated peace, but to a victory of real democracy for all the people of all countries and a world freed from the nightmare of violence and imperialist oppression.

The Committee earnestly appeal to the Indian people to end all internal conflict and controversy and, in this grave hour of peril, to keep in readiness and hold together as a united nation, calm of purpose and determined to achieve the freedom of India within the larger freedom of the world.

APPENDIX II

THE MUSLIM LEAGUE WORKING COMMITTEE RESOLUTION ON WAR, SEPTEMBER 18, 1939

1. The Working Committee of the All India Muslim League appreciate the course adopted by H.E. the Viceroy in inviting Mr M. A. Jinnah, President of the All India Muslim League, and apprising him regarding the international situation resulting in war, and his own views, to be conveyed to the Muslim League. The Working Committee have given their most earnest consideration to H.E. the Viceroy's views conveyed to them by the President and also to the pronouncement made by the Viceroy since the declaration of war by Great Britain as also His Excellency's address to the Members of the Central Legislature on the 11th of September 1939.

2. The Committee are of opinion that the views expressed by the Council of the All India Muslim League by its resolution No. 8 of the 27th of August 1939 in the following words 'while deploring the policy of the British Government

towards the Muslims of India by attempting to force upon them against their will a constitution, and in particular the Federal Scheme as embodied in the Government of India Act 1935, which allows a permanent hostile communal majority to trample upon the religious, political, social and economic rights and the utter neglect and indifference shown by the Viceroy and the Governors in the Congress-governed provinces in exercising their special powers to protect and secure justice to the minorities; and towards the Arabs in Palestine in refusing to meet their demands, holds the view that in these circumstances if the British Government desires to enlist the support and the sympathy of the Muslims of the world, and particularly of the Indian Muslims in future contingencies it must meet the demands of the Muslims of India without delay', are the true sentiments and opinions of the Mussalmans of India.

3. The Working Committee appreciate the declaration of H.E. the Viceroy, which is in the interest of India and particularly the Mussalmans, that the Federal Scheme embodied in the Government of India Act 1935 has been suspended. They wish that instead of its being suspended it had been abandoned completely and desire to convey to His Majesty's Government that they should do so without further delay. The Committee desire to make it clear that they do not endorse the 'Federal objective' of His Majesty's Government referred to by His Excellency in his address to the Members of the Central Legislature and strongly urge upon the British Government to review and revise the entire problem of India's future constitution 'de novo' in the light of the experience gained by the working of the present Provincial Constitution of India and developments that have taken place since 1935 or may take place hereafter.

4. The Committee in this connection wish to point out that Muslim India occupies a special and peculiar position in the polity of India and for several decades it had hoped to occupy an honourable place in the national life, Government and administration of the country and worked for free India with Free Independent Islam in which they could play an equal part with the major community with complete sense of security of their religious, political, cultural, social and econo-

mic rights and interests ; but the developments that have taken place, and especially since the inauguration of the provincial Constitution based on the so-called democratic parliamentary system of government, and the recent experiences of over two years have established beyond doubt that it has resulted wholly in a permanent communal majority and the domination of the Hindus over the Muslim minorities whose life and liberty, property and honour, are in danger and even their religious rights and culture are being assailed and annihilated every day under the Congress Governments in various Provinces.

5. That while Muslim India stands against exploitation of the people of India and has repeatedly declared in favour of 'Free India' it is equally opposed to the domination of Hindu majority over Mussalmans and other minorities and vassalization of Muslim India and is irrevocably opposed to any 'federal objective' which must necessarily result in a majority community rule under the guise of democracy and parliamentary system of government. Such a constitution is totally unsuited to the genius of the people of the country which is composed of various nationalities and does not constitute a national state.

6. The Muslim League condemns unprovoked aggression and the doctrine that 'might is right' and upholds the principles of freedom of humanity and 'that the will of the strongest irrespective of right and justice cannot be allowed to prevail'. The Committee express their deep sympathy for Poland, England and France. The Committee, however, feel that real and solid Muslim co-operation and support to Great Britain in this hour of her trial cannot be secured successfully if His Majesty's Government and the Viceroy are unable to secure to the Mussalmans justice and fairplay in the Congress governed Provinces where today their liberty, person, property and honour are in danger and even their elementary rights are most callously trampled upon. The Committee strongly urge upon His Majesty's Government and the Viceroy and Governor-General to direct the Governors to exercise their special powers, where any Provincial Ministry fails to secure justice and fairplay to the Mussalmans or where they resort to oppression or interference with their political, economic, social and cul-

tural rights, in accordance with the sacred promises, assurances and declarations repeatedly made by Great Britain, in consequence of which these special powers were expressly embodied in the Statute. The Committee regret to say that so far these special powers have remained dormant and obsolete and the Governors have failed to protect the rights of the Mussalmans under the threat by the 'High Command' of the Congress that exercise of these special powers on the part of the Governors will lead to crisis in all the Congress-governed Provinces, where they are in a solid majority.

7. While the Muslim League stands for the freedom of India, the Committee further urge upon His Majesty's Government and ask for an assurance that no declaration regarding the question of constitutional advance for India should be made without the consent and approval of the All-India Muslim League, nor any constitution be framed and finally adopted by His Majesty's Government and the British Parliament without such consent and approval.

8. The policy of the British Government towards the Arabs in Palestine has wounded deeply Muslim feeling and sentiment and all representations in that behalf have had no real effect so far. The Committee once more urge upon His Majesty's Government to satisfy the Arab National demands.

9. If full, effective, and honourable co-operation of the Mussalmans is desired by the British Government in the grave crisis which is facing the world today and if it is desired to bring it to a successful termination, it must create a sense of security and satisfaction amongst the Mussalmans and take into its confidence the Muslim League which is the only organisation that can speak on behalf of Muslim India.

10. At this critical and difficult juncture the Committee appeals to every Mussalman to stand solidly under the flag of the All India Muslim League with a solemn and sacred determination to make every sacrifice, for on it depend the future destiny and the honour of the 90 millions of Mussalmans in India.

APPENDIX III

THE ALL-INDIA HINDU MAHASABHA RESOLUTION ON WAR, SEPTEMBER, 1939

The Working Committee does not believe in the claims of any power among the belligerent Nations engaged in the present war in Europe, some of which are themselves Imperialistic in character and outlook, to the effect that it has been actuated solely by moral and altruistic considerations apart from its own national self-interests. But in ivew of the declaration made by His Majesty's Government that it has entered the war with a desire to safeguard the vital principles of right and democracy as against the rule of force—which claim does not fit in well with Britain's Imperialistic policy towards India—and in view of the fact that nowhere is there greater necessity for the application of these principles than in India, the Hindu Mahasabha declares as follows :

1. As the task of defending India from any military attack is of common concern to the British Government as well as ourselves and as we are unfortunately not in a position today to carry out that responsibility unaided, there is ample room for whole-hearted co-operation between India and England. In order to make such co-operation effective the British Government should forthwith take the following steps :

(*a*) To introduce full Responsible Government at the Centre.

(*b*) To redress the grievous wrongs done to the Hindus by the communal decision, both at the Centre and in the Provinces, particularly in Bengal and the Punjab where they have been reduced to the position of fixed statutory minority contrary to all principles of democracy.

(*c*) To inspire the people of India to feel instinctively that the Indian army will be the army of the people of India and not of the British.

(*d*) To remove artificial distinction of the so-called enlisted and non-enlisted classes, that is, the

martial and non-martial classes for complete Indianisation of the Indian army as early as possible.

(*e*) To modify the Arms Act to bring it on par with what prevails in England.

(*f*) To expand on an extensive scale Indian Territorial Force and the Universities Training Corps and for establishing such military organisations in the Provinces where they do not exist at present and to substantially increase the intake of cadets and the Indian Military Academy and to intensify their training in all branches of warfare so that an effective defence force may be ever ready at hand.

2. That the Government of India should take immediate steps to encourage the Indian manufacturing firms to start manufacture of aero-engines and motor engines and implements of modern warfare so that India may be made self-sufficient and not dependent helplessly on foreign countries for the supply of implements of modern mechanization for the Indian Army.

3. The Hindu Mahasabha calls upon the Hindus throughout India to organize Hindu National Militia in their respective Provinces and Hindus between the ages of 18 and 40 should, in as large numbers as possible, immediately enrol as members thereof.

4. The Hindu Mahasabha condemns the spirit of bargaining and of taking undue advantage of the present crisis for the promotion of purely communal interest at the expense of national well being, such as has been exhibited by the Muslim League in the statement issued by its President, Mr Jinnah, after his interview with the Viceroy, and warns the Hindus to be on their guard and to be prepared to fight for their rights and privileges as well as for the defence of Hindustan.

5. The Hindu Mahasabha respectfully brings to the notice of His Excellency the Viceroy that the Congress does not represent the Hindus and that no settlement will be acceptable to the Hindus if arrived at behind the back of the Hindu Mahasabha in consequence of any bargain between the

Government on one side and the Muslim League and the Congress on the other.

APPENDIX IV

RESOLUTION OF THE NATIONAL LIBERAL FEDERATION OF INDIA ON WAR

The Federation strongly condemns the policy of aggression followed by the totalitarian States against smaller or weaker States and sympathizes with the victims. The Federation considers that Great Britain and France are fighting Germany in the cause of democracy and freedom and feels that Indian sympathies are on the side of the democratic nations and that the whole of India wishes that their efforts will be crowned with success.

The Federation appeals to all Indians to give their support to the cause for which the democracies are fighting.

The Federation is convinced that the larger interests of India are bound up with the defeat of Nazism and the success of the cause of democracy and freedom. At the same time in order to enable this country to put forth its wholehearted support, the imagination of the people should be captured by a change in the attitude of the British Government regarding the future of India.

APPENDIX V

INSTRUCTIONS ISSUED BY THE PARLIAMENTARY SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE CONGRESS WORKING COMMITTEE IN OCTOBER,1939, FOR THE GUIDANCE OF MINISTRIES AND CONGRESS PARTIES IN THE CONGRESS PROVINCES

The resolution of the Working Committee calls upon Congress Provincial Governments to tender their resignation. These resignations should be given after the Assembly meetings which have been convened for the purpose of discussing such urgent business as may be pending but it is expected that resignations will be tendered by October 31, 1939.

The Central Provinces and Orissa Assemblies have been convened to meet at the beginning of November and the Provincial Governments in these provinces will remain in office till after this meeting.

Speakers and Deputy Speakers and members of the Assemblies, Presidents and members of the Councils are expected to retain their offices and seats. Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries are the only persons who are at present expected to resign.

With regard to the resolution to be moved in the Assemblies on war aims, suitable amendments should be made in view of the new developments.

APPENDIX VI

THE RESOLUTION ON WAR CRISIS AND INDIVIDUAL SATYAGRAHA ADOPTED AT THE PLENARY SESSION OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS AT RAMGARH, MARCH 1940

This Congress, having considered the grave and critical situation resulting from the war in Europe and British policy in regard to it, approves of and endorses the resolutions passed and the action taken on the war situation by the A.I.C.C. and the Working Committee. The Congress considers the declaration by the British Government of India as a belligerent country, without any reference to the people of India, and the exploitation of India's resources in this war, as an affront to them, which no self-respecting and freedom-loving people can accept or tolerate. The recent pronouncements made on behalf of the British Government in regard to India demonstrate that Great Britain is carrying on the war fundamentally for imperialist ends and for the preservation and strengthening of her Empire, as well as other Asiatic and African countries. Under these circumstances, it is clear that the Congress cannot in any way, directly or indirectly, be a party to the War, which means continuance and perpetuation of this exploitation. The Congress therefore strongly disapproves of Indian troops being made to fight for Great Britain and of the drain from India of men and material for the purposes of

the war. Neither the recruiting nor the money raised in India can be considered to be voluntary contributions from India. Congressmen, and those under the Congress influence, cannot help in the prosecution of the war with men, money or material.

The Congress hereby declares again that nothing short of complete independence can be accepted by the people of India. Indian freedom cannot exist within the orbit of imperialism, and dominion or any other status, within the imperial structure is wholly inapplicable to India, is not in keeping with the dignity of a great nation, and would bind India in many ways to British policies and economic structure. The people of India alone can properly shape their own constitution and determine their relations to the other countries of the world, through a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of adult suffrage.

The Congress is further of opinion that while it will always be ready, as it ever has been, to make every effort to secure communal harmony, no permanent solution is possible except through a Constituent Assembly, where the rights of all recognised minorities will be fully protected by agreement, as far as possible, between the elected representatives of various majority and minority groups, or by arbitration if agreement is not reached on any point. Any alternatives will lack finality. India's constitution must be based on independence, democracy and national unity, and the Congress repudiates attempts to divide India or to split up her nationhood. The Congress has always aimed at a constitution where the fullest freedom and opportunities of development are guaranteed to the group and the individual, and social injustice yields place to a juster social order.

The Congress cannot admit the right of the Rulers of Indian States, or of foreign vested interests to come in the way of Indian freedom. Sovereignty in India must rest with the people, whether in the States or the Provinces, and all other interests must be subordinated to their vital interests. The Congress holds that the difficulty raised in regard to the States is of British creation and it will not be satisfactorily solved unless the declaration of the freedom of India from foreign rule is unequivocally made. Foreign interests, if they

are not in conflict with the interests of the Indian people, will be protected.

The Congress withdrew the Ministries from the Provinces where the Congress had a majority in order to dissociate India from the War and to enforce the Congress determination to free India from foreign domination. This preliminary step must naturally be followed by Civil Disobedience, to which the Congress will unhesitatingly resort as soon as the Congress Organisation is considered fit enough for the purpose, or in case circumstances so shape themselves as to precipitate a crisis. The Congress desires to draw the attention of Congressmen to Gandhiji's declaration that he can only undertake the responsibility of declaring Civil Disobedience when he is satisfied that they are strictly observing discipline and are carrying out the constructive programme prescribed in the Independence Pledge.

The Congress seeks to represent and serve all classes and communities without distinction of race or religion, and the struggle for Indian Independence is for the freedom of the whole nation. Hence the Congress cherishes the hope that all classes and communities will take part in it. The purpose of Civil Disobedience is to evoke the spirit of sacrifice in the whole nation.

The Congress hereby authorises the All India Congress Committee and in the event of this being necessary, the Working Committee, to take all steps to implement the foregoing resolution, as the Committee concerned may deem necessary.

APPENDIX VII

THE RESOLUTION OF THE CONGRESS WORKING COMMITTEE AT DELHI, CONFIRMED BY THE A.I.C.C. AT POONA ON JULY 28, 1940, KNOWN AS THE 'POONA OFFER'

The Working Committee have noted the serious happenings which have called for fresh appeals to bring about a solution of the deadlock in the Indian political situation; and in view of the desirability of clarifying the Congress position they have earnestly examined the whole situation once again in the light of the latest developments in world affairs.

The Working Committee are more than ever convinced that the acknowledgement by Great Britain of the complete Independence of India, is the only solution of the problems facing both India and Britain and are, therefore, of opinion that such an unequivocal declaration should be immediately made and that as an immediate step in giving effect to it, a provisional National Government should be constituted at the Centre, which though formed as a transitory measure, should be such as to command the confidence of all the elected elements in the Central Legislature, and secure the closest co-operation of the Responsible Government in the province.

The Working Committee are of opinion that unless the aforesaid declaration is made, and a National Government accordingly formed at the Centre without delay, all efforts at organizing the material and moral resources of the country for the Defence cannot in any sense be voluntary or as from a free country, and will therefore be effective. The Working Committee declare that if these measures are adopted, it will enable the Congress to throw in its full weight in the efforts for the effective organisation of the Defence of the country.

APPENDIX VIII

VICEROY'S 'AUGUST OFFER', 1940

India's anxiety at this moment of critical importance in the world struggle against tyranny and aggression to contribute to the full to the common cause and to the triumph of our common ideals is manifest. She has already made a mighty contribution. She is anxious to make a greater contribution still.

His Majesty's Government are deeply concerned that that unity of national purpose in India which would enable her to do so should be achieved at as early a moment as possible. They feel that some further statement of their intentions may help to promote that unity. In that hope they have authorised me to make the present statement.

Last October His Majesty's Government again made it clear that Dominion Status was their objective for India. They added that they were ready to authorise the expansion of the Governor-General's Council to include a certain num-

ber of representatives of political parties, and they proposed the establishment of a Consultative Committee. In order to facilitate harmonious co-operation it was obvious that some measure of agreement in the Provinces between the major parties was a desirable pre-requisite to their joint collaboration at the Centre. Such agreement was unfortunately not reached, and in the circumstances no progress was then possible.

During the earlier part of this year I continued my efforts to bring political parties together. In these last few weeks I again entered into conversation with prominent political personages in British India and the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, the results of which have been reported to His Majesty's Government. His Majesty's Government have seen also the resolutions passed by the Congress Working Committee, the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha.

It is clear that the earlier differences which had prevented the achievement of national unity remain unbridged. Deeply as His Majesty's Government regret this, they do not feel that they should any longer, because of these differences, postpone the expansion of the Governor-General's Council, and the establishment of a body which will more closely associate Indian public opinion with the conduct of the war by the Central Government.

They have authorised me accordingly to invite a certain number of representative Indians to join my Executive Council. They have authorised me further to establish a War Advisory Council, which would meet at regular intervals, and which would contain representatives of the Indian States, and of other interests in the national life of India as a whole.

The conversations which have taken place, and the resolutions of the bodies which I have just mentioned, make it clear, however that there is still in certain quarters doubt as to the intentions of His Majesty's Government for the constitutional future of India, and that there is doubt, too, as to whether the position of minorities, whether political or religious, is sufficiently safeguarded in relation to any constitutional change by the assurance already given. There are two main points that have emerged. On those two points His Majesty's Government now desire me to make their position clear.

The first is to the position of minorities in relation to any future constitutional scheme. It has already been made clear that my declaration of last October does not exclude examination of any part either of the Act of 1935 or of the policy and plans on which it is based. His Majesty's Government's concern that full weight should be given to the views of the minorities in any revision has also been brought out. That remains the position of His Majesty's Government.

It goes without saying that they could not contemplate the transfer of their present responsibilities for the peace and welfare of India to any system of Government whose authority is directly denied by large and powerful elements in India's national life. Nor could they be parties to the coercion of such elements into submission to such a government.

The second point of general interest is the machinery for building within the British Commonwealth of Nations a new constitutional scheme when the time comes. There has been very strong insistence that the framing of that scheme should be primarily the responsibility of Indians themselves, and should originate from Indian conceptions of the social, economic and political structure of Indian life.

His Majesty's Government are in sympathy with that desire, and wish to see it given the fullest practical expression subject to the due fulfilment of the obligations which Great Britain's long connection with India has imposed upon her, for which His Majesty's Government cannot divest themselves of responsibility.

It is clear that a moment when the Commonwealth is engaged in a struggle for existence is not one in which fundamental constitutional issues can be decisively resolved. But His Majesty's Government authorise me to declare that they will most readily assent to the setting up after the conclusion of the war with the least possible delay of a body representative of the principal elements in India's national life in order to devise the framework of the new constitution and they will lend every aid in their power to hasten decisions on all relevant matters to the utmost degree.

Meanwhile they will welcome and promote in any way possible every sincere and practical step that may be taken by representative Indians themselves to reach a basis of friend-

ly agreement, firstly, on the form which the post-war representative body should take, and the methods by which it should arrive at its conclusions, and secondly upon the principles and outlines of the constitution itself.

They trust, however, that for the period of the war (with the Central Government reconstituted and strengthened in the manner I have described and with the help of the War Advisory Council) all parties, communities and interests will combine and co-operate in making a notable Indian contribution to the victory of the world cause which is at stake. Moreover they hope that in this process new bounds of union and understanding will emerge and thus pave the way towards the attainment by India of that free and equal partnership in the British Commonwealth which remains the proclaimed and accepted goal of the Imperial Crown and of the British Parliament.

APPENDIX IX

'QUIT INDIA' RESOLUTION OF THE CONGRESS, AUGUST 8, 1942

The All-India Congress Committee has given the most careful consideration to the reference made to it by the Working Committee in their resolution dated July 14, 1942, and to subsequent events, including the development of the war situation, the utterances of responsible spokesmen of the British Government, and the comments and criticisms made in India and abroad. The Committee approves of and endorses that resolution and is of opinion that events subsequent to it have given it further justification, and have made it clear that the immediate ending of British rule in India is an urgent necessity, both for the sake of India and for the success of the cause of the United Nations. The continuation of that rule is degrading and enfeebling India and making her progressively less capable of defending herself, and of contributing to the cause of world freedom.

The Committee has viewed with dismay, the deterioration of the situation on the Russian and Chinese fronts and conveys to the Russian and Chinese peoples its high apprecia-

tion of their heroism in defence of their freedom. This increasing peril makes it incumbent on all those who strive for freedom and who sympathise with the victims of aggression, to examine the foundations of the policy so far pursued by the Allied Nations, which have led to repeated and disastrous failures. It is not by adhering to such aims and policies and methods that failure can be converted into success, for past experience has shown that failure is inherent in them. These policies have been based not on freedom so much as on the domination of subject and colonial countries, and the continuation of imperialist tradition and method. The position of Empire, instead of adding to the strength of the ruling power, has become a burden and a curse. India, the classic land of modern imperialism, has become the crux of the question ; for by the freedom of India will Britain and the United Nations be judged, and the peoples of Asia and Africa be filled with hope and enthusiasm. The ending of British rule in this country is thus vital and immediate issue on which depends the future of the war and the success of freedom and democracy. A free India will assure this success by throwing all her great resources in the struggle for freedom against the aggression of Nazism, Fascism and Imperialism. This will not only affect materially fortunes of the War but will bring all subject and oppressed humanity on the side of the United Nations and give these Nations, whose ally India would be, the moral and spiritual leadership of the world. India in bondage will continue to be the symbol of British Imperialism and the taint of that imperialism will affect the fortunes of all the United Nations.

The peril of today, therefore, necessitates the independence of India and the ending of British domination. No future promises or guarantees can affect the present situation or meet the peril. They cannot produce the needed psychological effect on the mind of the masses. Only the glow of freedom now can realise that energy and enthusiasm of millions of people which will immediately transform the nature of the war.

The A.-I.C.C., therefore repeats with all emphasis the demand for the withdrawal of the British Power from India. On the declaration of India's independence, a provisional Go-

vernment will be formed and Free India will become an ally of the United Nations, sharing with them in the trials and tribulations of the joint enterprise of the struggle for freedom. The Provisional Government can only be formed by the co-operation of the principal parties and groups in the country. It will thus be a composite government representative of all important sections of the people of India. Its primary functions must be to defend India and resist aggression with all the armed as well as the non-violent forces at its command, together with its allied powers, and to promote the well-being and progress of the workers in the fields and factories and elsewhere, to whom essentially all power and authority must belong. The Provisional Government will evolve a scheme for a Constituent Assembly which will prepare a constitution for the Government of India acceptable to all sections of the people. This constitution, according to the Congress view, should be a federal one, with the largest measure of autonomy for the federating units, and with residuary powers vesting in these units. The future relations between India and the Allied Nations will be adjusted by representatives of all these free countries conferring together for their mutual advantage and for their co-operation in the common task of resisting aggression. Freedom will enable India to resist aggression effectively with the people's united will and strength behind it.

The freedom of India must be the symbol of and prelude to this freedom of all other Asiatic nations under foreign domination. Burma, Malaya, Indo-China, Indonesia, Iran and Iraq must also attain their complete freedom. It must be clearly understood that such of these countries as are under Japanese control now, must not subsequently be placed under the rule or control of any another colonial power.

While the A.I.C.C. must primarily be concerned with the independence and defence of India in this hour of danger, the committee is of opinion that the future peace, security and ordered progress of the world demand a World Federation of free nations, and on no other basis can the problems of the modern world be solved. Such a World Federation would ensure the freedom of its constituent nations, the prevention of aggression and exploitation by one nation over another, the protection of national minorities, the advancement of all back-

ward areas and peoples, and the pooling of the world's resources for the common good of all. On the establishment of such a World Federation, disarmament would be practicable in all countries ; national armies, navies and air force would no longer be necessary, and a World Federal Defence Force would keep the world peace and prevent aggression.

An Independent India would gladly join such a World Federation and co-operate on an equal basis with other countries in the solution of international problems.

Such a Federation should be open to all nations who agree with its fundamental principles. In view of the war, however, the Federation must inevitably, to begin with, be confined to the United Nations. Such a step taken now will have a most powerful effect on the war, on the people of the Axis countries, and on the peace to come.

The Committee regretfully realises, however, that despite the tragic and overwhelming lessons of the war and the perils that overhang the world, the Governments of few countries are yet prepared to take this inevitable step towards World Federation. The reactions of the British Government and the misguided criticisms of the foreign Press also make it clear that even the obvious demand for India's independence is resisted, though this has been made essentially to meet the present peril and to enable India to defend herself and help China and Russia in their hour of need. The Committee is anxious not to embarrass in any way the defence of China or Russia whose freedom is precious and must be preserved, or to jeopardise the defensive capacity of the United Nations. But the peril grows both to India and these nations, and inaction and submission to a foreign administration at this stage is not only degrading India and reducing her capacity to defend herself and resist aggression, but is no answer to that growing peril and is no service to the peoples of the United Nations. The earnest appeal of the Working Committee to Great Britain and the United Nations has so far met with no response and the criticisms made in many foreign quarters have shown an ignorance of India's freedom, which is significant of a mentality of domination and radical superiority, which cannot be tolerated by a proud people conscious of their strength and of the justice of their cause.

The A.-I.C.C. would yet again at this last moment in the interest of the world freedom, renew this appeal to Britain and the United Nations. But the Committee feel that it is no longer justified in holding the nation back from endeavouring to assert its will against an imperialist and authoritarian government which dominates over it and prevents it from functioning in its own interest and in the interest of humanity. The Committee resolves, therefore, to sanction for the vindication of India's inalienable right to freedom and independence, the starting of a mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale, so that the country might utilise all the non-violent strength it has gathered during the last twenty-two years of peaceful struggle. Such a struggle must inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhiji and the Committee requests him to take the lead and guide the nation in the steps to be taken.

The Committee appeals to the people of India to face the dangers and hardships that will fall to their lot with courage and endurance, and to hold together under the leadership of Gandhiji, and carry out his instructions as disciplined soldiers of Indian freedom. They must remember that non-violence is the basis of this movement. A time may come when it may not be possible to issue instructions or for instructions to reach our people and when no Congress Committees can function. When this happens, every man and woman, who is participating in this movement must function for himself or herself within the four corners of the general instructions issued. Every Indian who desires freedom and strives for it must be his own guide urging him on along the hard road where there is no resting place and which leads ultimately to the independence and deliverance of India.

Lastly whilst the A.-I.C.C. has stated its own view of the future governance under free India, the A.-I.C.C. wishes to make it quite clear to all concerned that by embarking on mass struggle it has no intention of gaining power for the Congress. The power, when it comes, will belong to the whole people of India.

APPENDIX X

RESOLUTION OF THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL-IN-COUNCIL ON THE 'QUIT INDIA' RESOLUTION OF THE CONGRESS, AUGUST 8, 1942

The A.-I.C.C. have ratified the resolution passed by the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress on August 8. That resolution demands the immediate withdrawal of British power from India, and sanctions 'the starting of a mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale'. The Governor-General-in-Council has been aware, too, for some days past of dangerous preparations by the Congress Party for unlawful, and in some cases, violent activities, directed among other things to the interruption of communications and public utility services, the organisation of strikes, tampering with the loyalty of Government servants and interference with defence measures, including recruitment.

The Government of India have waited patiently in the hope that wiser counsels might prevail. They have been disappointed in that hope. To a challenge such as the present there can only be one answer. The Government of India would regard it as wholly incompatible with their responsibilities to the people of India and their obligations to the Allies that a demand should be discussed, the acceptance of which would plunge India into confusion and anarchy internally, and would paralyse her effort in the common cause of human freedom.

For the demand of the Congress leaders there is no warrant. In the view of the Government of India that demand is difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile with a full sense of responsibility on the part of the leaders of the Congress Party, or a full appreciation by them of the realities of the present situation. The Congress Working Committee admit that 'there may be risks involved'. They are right.

Acceptance of the resolution must mean the exposure of India to Axis attack from without. Internally the withdrawal of British rule invites civil war, the collapse of law and order, the outbreak of communal feud, the dislocation of economic life with its inevitable hardships. Nor can the Government

of India accept the claim of the Congress Party to speak for India as a whole.

The Congress Party has for long occupied a position of great prominence and great importance in Indian political life. At this day its importance is substantial. But it is the duty of the Government of India to take a balanced view of the interests of all sections of Indian thought and Indian opinion. And looking as they must to the repeated protests even in these last few days by the leaders of great communities and solidly established interests, by so many leaders of liberal thought, by those great sections of the population which are giving unstinted and invaluable support to the war against Axis aggression, they are confirmed in their view that that claim has no solid foundation, and that acceptance of the proposals now put forward by the Congress Party must mean the abandonment of all those large and powerful elements in the population which have condemned the course of action proposed by the Congress Party and which resent and resist the widespread dislocation which its acceptance would involve of India's war effort and of the general life of the community.

Nor can the Congress leaders claim that only thus can India's future be assured. The Congress Party is not India's mouthpiece, yet in the interests of securing their own dominance and in pursuit of their totalitarian policy, its leaders have consistently impeded the efforts made to bring India to full nationhood. But for the resistance of the Congress Party to all constructive endeavours, India might even now be enjoying self-Government.

British policy for India's future stands clear. It is that when hostilities cease, India shall devise for herself with full freedom of decision, and on a basis embracing all and not only a single party, the form of Government which she regards as most suited to her conditions: and that in the meantime Indian leaders shall fully participate in the Government of their country and in the counsels of the Commonwealth and of the United Nations. The fullest opportunity for the attainment of self-government by the people of India has been guaranteed by His Majesty's Government. It is on the basis fully accepted by His Majesty's Government and by the people of Great Britain that the fullest opportunity shall be given

for the attainment of self-government by the Indian people, that when the day of victory comes the final structure of India's constitution will be erected by Indians themselves. That those guarantees given by the British Parliament and the British people are accepted by the people of India we firmly believe.

The suggestion put forward by the Congress Party that the millions of India, uncertain as to the future, are ready, despite the sad lessons of so many martyr countries to throw themselves into the arms of the invaders is one that the Government of India cannot accept as a true representation of the feeling of the people of this great country.

The leaders of the Congress Party have claimed that the withdrawal of British rule 'with good-will' will 'result in establishing a stable provisional government in India, and co-operation between this Government and the United Nations in resisting aggression and helping China.' There is no justification for those claims. Nor can the Government of India accept the suggestion that a stable provisional government could be formed in a moment of time, within a day or two of the withdrawal of British power.

Past experience has shown, to their profound regret, the existence of deep differences in this country, the harmonizing of which must be the object of all on whom responsibility falls, the removal of which is the ambition and the hope of the present Government of India. But to deny that those problems confront India today would be to ignore the facts; and the Government of India are satisfied that the interval between the withdrawal of British rule and the establishment of a stable provisional Government would provide an open opportunity for the enemies of order and for all dissident elements in the population.

In the view of the Government of India, it is not too much to say that acceptance of the demand now put forward by the Congress Party must mean the betrayal of the Allies, whether in or outside India, the betrayal in particular to Russia and China, the betrayal of those ideals to which so much support has been given and is given today from the true heart and mind of India, the betrayal of India's fighting men whose glory is so great, and the betrayal of all those loyal

and co-operating elements which do not support the Congress Party, but which have played so active and so valuable a part in British India and the Indian States in the prosecution of the war.

India has today a Government stronger and more representative than ever in the past, a Government predominantly Indian and non-official, a Government determined to prosecute the war and no less determined to lead India on to her political goal. There is nothing that the Government of India regret more than this challenge at so critical a juncture.

But on them there lies the task of defending India, of maintaining India's capacity to wage war, of safeguarding India's interests, of holding the balance between the different sections of the people without fear or favour. That task the Government of India will discharge in the face of the challenge now thrown down by the Congress Party with clean determination, but with an anxiety that action shall be preventive of the interruption of war effort and the other dangers to which they have referred rather than punitive, and with a full consciousness of responsibility to India and to the cause of the Allies and of civilisation.

Their duty is plain and they have to discharge it, profoundly as they must deplore the situation which they have been called to face. They urge the people of India to unite with them in resistance of the present challenge of a Party. They appeal to them to lay aside all political differences, and for the period of war to place before all other considerations the defence of their country and the achievement of those common aims, on which depends the future not only of India but of all the freedom-loving people of the world.

APPENDIX XI

MAHATMA GANDHI'S SPEECH ON THE 'QUIT INDIA' RESOLUTION ON AUGUST 8, 1942

I congratulate you on the resolution that you have just passed. I also congratulate the three comrades on the courage they have shown in pressing their amendments to a division, even though they knew that there was an overwhelming majority in favour of the resolution. I congratulate the thirteen

friends who voted against the resolution. In doing so they had nothing to be ashamed of. For the last twenty years we have tried to learn not to lose courage even when we are in a hopeless minority and are laughed at. We have learned to hold on to our beliefs in the confidence that we are in the right. It behoves us to cultivate this courage of conviction, for it ennobles man and raises his moral stature. I was, therefore, glad to see that these friends had imbibed the principle which I have tried to follow for the last fifty years and more.

Having congratulated them on their courage, let me say that what they asked this Committee to accept through their amendments was not a correct representation of the situation. These friends ought to have pondered over the appeal made to them by the Maulana to withdraw their amendments; they should have carefully followed the explanations given by Jawaharlal. Had they done so, it would have been clear to them that the right which they now want the Congress to concede, has already been conceded by the Congress.

Time was when every Mussalman claimed the whole of India as his motherland. During the years that the Ali Brothers were with me, the assumption underlying all their talks and discussions was that India belonged as much to the Mussalmans as to the Hindus. I can testify to the fact that this was their innermost conviction and not a mask. I lived with them for years. I spent days and nights in their company. And I make bold to say that their utterances were the honest expression of their beliefs. I know there are some who say that I take things too readily at their face value, that I am gullible. I do not think I am such a simpleton, nor am I so gullible as these friends take me to be. But their criticism does not hurt me. I should prefer to be considered gullible rather than deceitful.

What these Communist friends proposed through their amendments is nothing new. It has been repeated from thousands of platforms. Thousands of Mussalmans have told me that, if the Hindu-Muslim question was to be solved satisfactorily, it must be done in my lifetime. I should feel flattered at this; but how can I agree to a proposal which does not appeal to my reason? Hindu-Muslim unity is not a new

thing. Millions of Hindus and Mussalmans have sought after it. I consciously strove for its achievement from my boyhood. While at school, I made it a point to cultivate the friendship of Muslim and Parsi co-students. I believed even at that tender age that the Hindus in India, if they wished to live in peace and amity with other communities, should assiduously cultivate the virtue of neighbourliness. It did not matter, I felt, if I made no special effort to cultivate the friendship of Hindus, but I must make friends with at least a few Mussalmans. It was as Counsel for a Mussalman merchant that I went to South Africa. I made friends with other Mussalmans there, even with the opponents of my client, and gained a reputation for integrity and good faith. I had among my friends and co-workers Muslims as well as Parsis. I captured their hearts and when I left finally for India, I left them sad and shedding tears of grief at the separation.

In India too, I continued my efforts and left no stone unturned to achieve that unity. It was my life-long aspiration for it that made me offer my fullest co-operation to the Mussalmans in the Khilafat movement. Muslims throughout the country accepted me as their true friend.

How then is it that I have now come to be regarded as so evil and detestable? Had I any axe to grind in supporting the Khilafat movement? True, I did in my heart of hearts cherish a hope that it might enable me to save the cow. I am a worshipper of the cow. I believe the cow and myself to be the creation of the same God, and I am prepared to sacrifice my life in order to save her. But, whatever my philosophy of life and my ultimate hopes, I joined the movement in no spirit of bargain. I co-operated in the struggle for the Khilafat solely in order to discharge my obligation to my neighbour who, I saw, was in distress. The Ali Brothers, had they been alive today, would have testified to the truth of this assertion. And so would have Maulana Abdul Bari Saheb. Khwaja Saheb and others would even today bear me out in that it was not a bargain on my part for saving the cow. As an honest man, a true neighbour and a faithful friend, it was incumbent on me to stand by the Mussalmans in the hour of their trial.

In those days I shocked the Hindus by dining with the

Mussalmans, though with the passage of time they have now got used to it. Maulana Bari told me, however, that, though he would insist on having me as his guest, he would not allow me to dine with him, lest some day he should be accused of a sinister motive. And so, whenever I had occasion to stay with him, he called a Brahmin cook and made special arrangements for separate cooking. 'Firangi Mahal', his residence, was an old-styled structure with limited accommodation; yet he cheerfully bore all hardships and carried out his resolve from which I could not dislodge him. It was the spirit of courtesy, dignity and nobility that inspired us in those days. Members of each community vied with one another in accommodating members of sister communities. They respected one another's religious feelings, and considered it a privilege to do so. Not a trace of suspicion lurked in anybody's heart. Where has all that dignity—that nobility of spirit—disappeared now? I should ask all Mussalmans, including the Qaid-e-Azam, to recall those glorious days and to find out what has brought us to the present impasse. The Qaid-e-Azam himself was at one time a Congressman. If today the Congress has incurred his wrath, it is because the canker of suspicion has entered his heart. May God bless him with long life, but when I am gone, he will realise and admit that I had no designs on the Mussalmans and that I had never betrayed their interests. Where is the escape for me if I injure their interests? My life is entirely at their disposal. They are free to put an end to it whenever they wish to do so. Assaults have been made on my life in the past, but God has spared me till now, and the assailants have repented for their action. But if someone were to shoot me in the belief that he was getting rid of a rascal, he would kill not the real Gandhi, but the one that appeared to him rascal.

To those who have been indulging in a campaign of abuse and vilification I would say, 'Islam enjoins you not to revile even an enemy. The Prophet treated even enemies with kindness and tried to win them over by his fairness and generosity. Are you followers of that Islam or of any other? If you are followers of the true Islam, does it behove you to distrust the words of one who makes a public declaration of his faith? You may take it from me that one day you will regret the

fact that you distrusted a friend of yours.' It cuts me to the quick to see that the more I appeal, the more the Maulana importunes, the more intense does the campaign of vilification grow. To me the abuse are like bullets. They can kill me, even as a bullet can put an end to my life. You may kill me. That will not hurt me. But what of those who indulge in abusing? They bring discredit to Islam. For the fair name of Islam, I appeal to you to resist this unceasing campaign of abuse and vilification.

The Maulana Saheb is being made a target for the filthiest abuse. Why? Because he refuses to exert on me the pressure of his friendship. He realises that it is a misuse of friendship to seek to compel a friend to accept as truth what he knows is an untruth.

To Qaid-e-Azam I would say, 'Whatever is true and valid in the claim for Pakistan is already in your hands. What is wrong and untenable is in nobody's gift so that it can be made over to you. Even if someone were to succeed in imposing an untruth on others, he would not be able to enjoy for long the fruits of such a coercion. God dislikes pride and keeps away from it. God would not tolerate a forcible imposition of an untruth.'

The Qaid-e-Azam says that he is compelled to say bitter things, but that he cannot help giving expression to his thought and feelings. Similarly I would say: I consider myself a friend of the Mussalmans. Why should I then not give expression to the things nearest to my heart, even at the cost of displeasing them? How can I conceal my innermost thoughts from them? I should congratulate the Qaid-e-Azam on his frankness in giving expression to his thoughts and feelings even if they sound bitter to his hearers. But even so, why should the Mussalmans sitting here be reviled if they do not see eye to eye with him? If millions of Mussalmans are with you, can you not afford to ignore the handful of Mussalmans who may appear to you to be misguided? Why should one with the following of several millions be afraid of a majority community, or of the minority being swamped by the majority? How did the Prophet work among the Arabs and Mussalmans? How did he propagate when he commanded a majority? I, therefore, appeal to you for the sake of Islam

to ponder over what I say. There is neither fairplay nor justice in saying that the Congress must accept a thing even if it does not believe in it and even if it goes counter to principles it holds dear.

Rajaji said to me : I do not believe in Pakistan. But the Mussalmans ask for it, Mr Jinnah asks for it, and it has become an obsession with them. Why not then say 'yes' to them just now? The same Mr Jinnah will later on realise the disadvantages of Pakistan and will forego the demand. I said it is not fair to accept as true a thing which I hold to be untrue, and ask others to do so in the belief that the demand will not be pressed when the time comes for settling it finally. If I hold the demand to be just, I should concede it this very day. I should not agree to it merely in order to placate Jinnah Saheb. Many friends have come and asked me to agree to it for the time being to placate Mr Jinnah and disarm his suspicions and to see how he reacts to it. But I cannot be party to a course of action with a false promise. At any rate, it is not my method.

The Congress has no sanction but a moral one for enforcing its decisions. It believes that true democracy can only be the outcome of non-violence.

The structure of a world federation can be raised only on a foundation of non-violence, and violence will have to be totally abjured from world affairs. If this is true, the solution of the Hindu-Muslim question, too, cannot be achieved by a resort to violence. If the Hindus tyranise over the Mussalmans, with what face they will talk of a world federation? It is for the same reason that I do not believe in the possibility of establishing world peace through violence as the English and American statesmen propose to do. The Congress has agreed to submit all differences to an impartial international tribunal and to abide by its decisions. If even this fairest of proposals is unacceptable, the only course that remains open is that of the sword, of violence. How can I persuade myself to agree to an impossibility? To demand the vivisection of a living organism is to ask for its very life. It is a call to war. The Congress cannot be party to such a fratricidal war. Those Hindus who, like Dr Moonje and Shri Savarkar, believe in the doctrine of the sword, may seek to

keep the Mussalmans under Hindu domination. I do not represent that section. I represent the Congress. You want to kill the Congress which is the goose that lays golden eggs. If you distrust the Congress, you may rest assured that there is to be perpetual war between the Hindus and the Mussalmans, and the country will be doomed to continued warfare and bloodshed. If such warfare is to be our lot, I shall not live to witness it.

It is for that reason that I say to Jinnah Saheb, 'You may take it from me that whatever in your demand for Pakistan accords with considerations of justice and equity, is lying in your pocket; whatever in the demand is contrary to justice and equity you can take only by the sword and in no other manner.'

There is much in my heart that I would like to pour out before this assembly. One thing which was uppermost in my heart, I have already dealt with. You may take it from me that it is with me a matter of life and death. If we Hindus and Muslims mean to achieve a heart unity, without the slightest mental reservation on the part of either, we must first unite in the effort to be free from the shackles of this Empire.

If Pakistan, after all, is to be a portion of India, what objection can there be for Muslims against joining this struggle for India's freedom? The Hindus and Mussalmans must, therefore, unite in the first instance on the issue of fighting for freedom. Jinnah Saheb thinks the war will last long. I do not agree with him. If the war goes on for six months more, how shall we be able to save China?

I, therefore, want freedom immediately, this very night, before dawn, if it can be had. Freedom cannot now wait for the realisation of communal unity. If that unity is not achieved, sacrifices necessary for it will have to be much greater than would have otherwise sufficed. But the Congress must win freedom or be wiped out in the effort. And forget not that the freedom which the Congress is struggling to achieve will not be for the Congress alone but for all the forty crores of the Indian people. Congressmen must for ever remain humble servants of the people.

The Qaid-e-Azam has said that the Muslim League is

prepared to take over the rule from the Britishers if they are prepared to hand it over to the League, for the British took over the empire from the hands of the Muslims. This, however, will be Muslim Raj. The offer made by Maulana Saheb and by me does not imply the establishment of Muslim Raj or Muslim domination. The Congress does not believe in the domination of any group or community. It believes in democracy which includes in its orbit Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Parsis, Jews,—every one of the communities inhabiting this vast country. If Muslim Raj is inevitable, then let it be ; but how can we give it the stamp of our assent ? How can we agree to the domination of one community over the others ?

Millions of Mussalmans in this country come from Hindu stock. How can their homeland be any other than India ? My eldest son embraced Islam some years back. What would his homeland be,—Porbunder or the Punjab ? I ask the Mussalmans, 'If India is not your homeland, to what separate homeland would you put my son who embraced Islam ? His mother wrote him a letter after his conversion asking him if he had on embracing Islam given up drinking which Islam forbids to its followers. To those who gloated over the conversion she wrote to say : 'I do not mind his becoming a Mussalman so much as his drinking. Will you, as pious Mussalmans, tolerate his drinking even after his conversion ? He has reduced himself to the state of a rake by drinking. If you are going to make a man of him again, his conversion will have been turned to good account. You will, therefore, please see that he as a Mussalman abjures wine and woman. If that change does not come about, his conversion goes in vain and our non-co-operation with him will have to continue.'

India is without doubt the homeland of all the Mussalmans inhabiting this country. Every Mussalman should, therefore, co-operate in the fight for India's freedom. The Congress does not belong to any one class or community ; it belongs to the whole nation. It is open to the Mussalmans to take possession of the Congress. They can, if they like, swamp the Congress by their numbers, and can steer it along the course which appeals to them. The Congress is fighting

not on behalf of the Hindus but on behalf of the whole nation, including the minorities. It would hurt me to hear a single instance of a Mussalman being killed by a Congressman. In the coming revolution Congressmen will sacrifice their lives in order to protect the Mussalmans against a Hindus' attack and 'vice versa'. It is a part of their creed, and is one of the essentials of non-violence. You will be expected on occasions like these not to lose your heads. Every Congressman, whether a Hindu or Mussalman, owes this duty to the organisation to which he belongs. The Mussalman who will act in this manner will render a service to Islam. Mutual trust is essential for success in the final nationwide struggle that is to come.

I have said that much greater sacrifices will have to be made this time in the wake of our struggle because of the opposition from the Muslim League and from Englishmen. You have seen the secret circular issued by Sir Fredrick Puckle. It is a suicidal course that he has taken. It contains an open incitement to organisations which crop up like mushrooms to combine to fight the Congress. We have thus to deal with an Empire whose ways are crooked. Ours is a straight path which we can tread even with our eyes closed. That is the beauty of Satyagraha.

In Satyagraha there is no place for fraud or falsehood, or any kind of untruth. Fraud and untruth today are stalking the world. I cannot be a helpless witness to such a situation. I have travelled all over India as perhaps nobody in the present age has. The voiceless millions of the land saw in me their friend and representative, and I identified myself with them to the extent it was possible for a human being to do. I saw trust in their eyes, which I now want to turn to good account in fighting this Empire, upheld on untruth and violence. However gigantic the preparations that Empire has made, we must get out of its clutches. How can I remain silent at this supreme hour and hide my light under the bushel? Shall I ask the Japanese to tarry a while? If today I sit quiet and inactive, God will take me to task for not using up the treasure He had given me, in the midst of the conflagration that is enveloping the whole world. Had it not been so, I should have asked you to wait a little longer, as I

asked you to wait all these years. But the situation now has become intolerable, and the Congress has no other course left for it.

Nevertheless, the actual struggle does not commence this moment. You have only placed all your powers in my hands. I will now wait upon the Viceroy and plead with him for the acceptance of the Congress demand. That process is likely to take two or three weeks. What would you do in the meanwhile? What is the programme for the interval in which all can participate? As you know the spinning wheel is the first thing that occurs to me. I made the same answer to the Maulana in reply to his question. He would have none of it, though he understood its import later. The fourteen-fold constructive programme is, of course, there for you to carry out. What more should you do? I will tell you. Every one of you should, from this moment onwards, consider yourself a free man or woman, and act as if you are free and are no longer under the heel of this Imperialism.

It is not a make-believe that I am suggesting to you. It is the very essence of freedom. The bond of the slave is snapped the moment he considers himself to be a free being. He will plainly tell the master : 'I was your bond-slave till this moment, but I am a slave no longer. You may kill me if you like, but if you keep me alive, I wish to tell you : If you release me from the bondage of your own accord. I will ask for nothing more from you. You used to feed and clothe me, though I could have provided food and clothing for myself by my labour. I hitherto depended on you instead of on God, for food and raiment. But God has now inspired me with an urge for freedom and I am today a free man, and will no longer depend on you.'

You may take it from me that I am not going to strike a bargain with the Viceroy for ministries and the like. I am not going to be satisfied with anything short of complete freedom. May be, he will propose the abolition of salt tax, the drink evil, etc. But I will say, NOTHING LESS THAN FREEDOM.

Here is a *Mantra*—a short one that I give you. You may imprint it on your hearts and let every breath of yours give expression to it. The *mantra* is : 'We shall do or die.

We shall free India, or die in the attempt ; we shall not live to see the perpetuation of our slavery.' Every true Congressman or woman will join the struggle with an inflexible determination not to remain alive to see the country in bondage and slavery. Let that be your pledge. Keep jails out of your consideration. If the Government keeps me free, I will spare you the trouble of filling the jails. I will not put on the Government the strain of maintaining a large number of prisoners at a time when it is in trouble. Let every man and woman live every moment of his or her life hereafter in the consciousness that he or she eats or lives for achieving freedom and will die, if need be, to attain that goal. Take a pledge with God, and you will no longer rest till freedom is achieved, and will be prepared to lay down your lives in the attempt to achieve it. He who loses his life will gain it ; he who will seek to save it shall lose it. Freedom is not for the coward or the fainthearted.

A word to the Journalists. I congratulate you on the support you have hitherto given to the national demand. I know the restrictions and handicaps under which you have to labour. But I would now ask you to snap the chains that bind you. It should be the proud privilege of the newspapers to lead and set an example in laying down one's life for freedom. You have the pen which the Government cannot suppress. I know you have large properties in the form of printing presses etc., and you would be afraid lest the Government should attach them. I do not ask you to invite an attachment of the printing press voluntarily. For myself I would not suppress my pen, even if the press was to be attached. As you know my press was attached in the past and returned later on. But I do not ask from you that final sacrifice I suggest a middle way. You should now wind up your Standing Committee and you may declare that you will give up writing under the present restrictions and take up the pen only when India has won her freedom. You may tell Sir Fredrick Puckle that he cannot expect from you a command-performance, that his press-notes are full of untruth, and that you will refuse to publish them. And you will openly declare that you are whole-heartedly with the Congress. If you do this, you will have changed the atmosphere before the fight actually begins.

From the Princes I ask with all the respect due to them a very small thing I am a well-wisher of the Princes. I was born in a State. My father was Prime Minister in three States. He once refused to salute anyone except his own Prince. But he did not say to the Prince, as I feel he ought to have said, that he could not compel his minister to act against his conscience. I have eaten the Princes' salt, and I would not be false to it. As a faithful servant, it is my duty to warn them that if they will act while I am still alive, they may come to occupy an honourable place in Free India. In Jawaharlal's scheme of Free India no privileges or the privileged classes have a place. Jawaharlal considers all property to be State-owned. He wants planned economy. He wants to reconstruct India according to plan. He likes to fly ; I don't. I have kept a place for the Princes and the Zamindars in the India that I envisage. I would ask the Princes in all humility to enjoy through renunciation. They may renounce ownership over their properties and become their trustees in the true sense of the term. I visualise God in this assemblage of people as God. The Princes may say to their people ; 'You are the owners and masters of the State and we are your servants'. I would ask the Princes to become servants of the people and render to them an account of their own services. The Empire too can bestow power to the Princes but they should prefer to derive power from their own people; and if they want to indulge in some innocent pleasures, they may seek to do so as servants of the people. I do not want the Princes to live as paupers. But I would ask them : 'Do you want to remain slaves for all time? Why should you, instead of paying homage to a foreign power, not accept the sovereignty of your own people? You may write to the Political Department : "The people are now awake. How are we to withstand an avalanche before which even large Empires are crumbling? We shall, therefore, belong to the people from today onwards. We shall sink or swim with them." Believe me, there is nothing unconstitutional in the course I am suggesting. There are, so far as I know, no treaties enabling the Empire to coerce the Princes. The people of the States will also declare that though they are the Princes, they are rulers only if they cast their lot with the people but not

otherwise. If this declaration enrages the Princes and they choose to kill the people, the latter will meet death bravely and unflinchingly, but will not retract their words.

Nothing, however, should be done secretly. This is an open rebellion. In this struggle, secrecy is a sin : A freeman would not engage in a secret movement. It is likely that, when you gain freedom, you will have a C.I.D of your own in spite of my advice to the contrary. But in the present struggle we have to work openly and to receive bullets on our chest without taking to our heels. In a struggle of this character all secrecy is sin and must be punctiliously avoided.

I have a word to say to Government servants also. They may not, if they like, resign their posts yet. The late Justice Ranade did not resign his post, but he openly declared that he belonged to the Congress. He said to the Government that though he was a judge, he was a Congressman and would openly attend the sessions of the Congress, but that at the same time he would not let his political views warp his impartiality on the Bench. He held the Social Reform Conference in the very pandal of the Congress. I would ask all Government servants to follow in the footsteps of Ranade and declare their allegiance to the Congress as an answer to the secret circular issued by Sir Fredrick Puckle.

This is all that I ask of you just now. I will now write to the Viceroy. You will be able to read the correspondence not just now but when I publish it with the Viceroy's consent. But you are free to aver that you support the demand to be put forth in my letter. A judge came to me and said : 'We get secret circulars from high quarters. What are we to do?' I said, 'If I were in your place, I would ignore the circulars. You may openly say to the Government : "I have received your secret circular. I am, however, with the Congress. Though I serve the Government for my livelihood, I am not going to obey these secret circulars or to employ underhand methods."'

Soldiers, too, are covered by the present programme. I do not ask them just now to resign their posts and leave the army. Soldiers come to me, to Jawaharlal and to the Maulana and say : 'We are wholly with you, we are tired of the Government tyranny.' To those soldiers I would say : 'You may say to the Government, "Our hearts are with the Congress.

We are not going to leave our posts. We will serve you so long as we receive your salaries. We will obey your just orders but will refuse to fire on our own people."'

To those who lack the courage to do this much, I have nothing to say. They will go their own way. But if you can do this much, you may take it from me that the whole atmosphere will be electrified. Let the Government then shower bombs if they like. But no power on earth will then be able to keep you in bondage any longer.

If the students want to join the struggle only to go back to their studies after a while, I would not invite them to it. For the present, however, till the time that I frame a programme for the struggle, I would ask the students to say to their professors, 'We belong to the Congress. Do you belong to the Congress or to the Government? If you belong to the Congress, you need not vacate your posts. You will remain at your posts but teach us and lead us into freedom.' In all fights for freedom the world over students have made very large contributions.

If in the interval that is left to us before the actual fight begins, you do even the little I have suggested to you, you will have changed the atmosphere and will have prepared for the next step.

There is much I should yet like to say. But my heart is heavy. I have already taken up much of your time. I thank you for the patience and attention with which you have listened to me even at this late hour. It is just what true soldiers would do. For the last twenty-two years I have controlled my speech and pen, and have stored up my energy. He is a true Brahmachari who does not fritter away his energy. He will, therefore, always control his speech. That has been my conscious effort all these years. But today the occasion has come when I had to unburden my heart before you. I have done so even though it meant putting a strain on your patience, and I do not regret having done it; I have given you my message and through you I have delivered it to the whole of India.

APPENDIX XII

CHRONOLOGY OF WORLD WAR II WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO INDIA

1939

September	1	Germany invades Poland.
,,	3	Britain and France declare war against Germany.
		By proclamation, the Governor-General of India declares that India is at war with Germany.
,,	5	Viceroy and Gandhi meet at Simla.
,,	8–15	The Congress Working Committee meets at Wardha to consider the War situation.
,,	11	King's message to India is broadcast.
		The Governor-General addresses a joint session of the Central Legislature.
,,	14	The Congress Working Committee passes its Resolution on war crisis and India.
,,	26	Lord Zetland makes his statement on India in the House of Lords.
,,	28	Mahatma Gandhi replies to Lord Zetland.
,,	29	Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru replies to Lord Zetland.
October	3	The Viceroy meets the Congress President, Dr Rajendra Prasad, and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.
,,	4	The Viceroy meets Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.
,,	11	A.I.C.C. meets at Wardha to discuss the War crisis.
,,		A.I.C.C. passes the Resolution on War.
,,	12	Mr Chamberlain rejects Herr Hitler's peace proposals.
,,	18	The Viceroy makes a statement about Britain's policy towards India.
		Mahatma Gandhi replies to the Viceregal Statement.

October 22-23 The Wardha meeting of the Congress Working Committee asks Congress Ministries to resign.

December 27 Indian troops land in France.

1940

May 10 Mr Churchill becomes Britain's Prime Minister.

„ 11 British War Cabinet is formed.

May 28-June 3 Dunkirk is evacuated.

June 5 Sir Stafford Cripps is appointed Ambassador to Russia.

„ 11 Italy declares War on Britain and France.

„ 25 Hostilities in France are at an end and German Armistice is accepted by Marshal Petain on behalf of the French nation.

„ 28 The Viceroy promulgates a new Ordinance to conscript skilled Indian Labour.

July 5 Marshal Petain's Government break off diplomatic relations with Britain.

„ 28 Congress makes Poona offer.

August 8 Viceroy announces the 'August Offer'.

September 9 Indian troops arrive in Egyptian territory.

October 17 Individual Satyagraha is started by the Congress.

Acharya Vinobha Bhave offers Satyagraha.

„ 25 Eastern Group Conference is inaugurated by the Viceroy in New Delhi.

„ 26 First prohibitory order of the Government of India on the Indian Press is issued.

November 10 First A. I. N. E. C. meets in New Delhi.

„ 23 Mr Bevin outlines new scheme for Indian workers and seamen.

December 9 Wavell's Cyrenica offensive begins.

„ 11 4th Indian Division smashes Italian fortresses and captures Sidi Barrani.

1941

March 4 President Roosevelt signs Lease-Lend Bill.

March 30 H. M. the King sends messages to the Viceroy congratulating India on the part played by her armed forces in the capture of Keren.

April 3 Announcement is made of R.I.N.'s notable part in assisting land operations in Eritrea.

" 17 An Indian Brigade is landed to protect the oil supply line in Iraq.

" 18 British, Indian and other Imperial Forces arrive in Basrah.

June 22 Germany invades Russia.

August 14 Atlantic Charter meeting between Churchill and Roosevelt begins.

December 3 The Government of India announces its decision to release all individual Satyagrahis whose offence is formal and symbolic.

" 7 Japan launches air attack on U.S. Naval, Military and Air bases at Pearl Harbour. Other air attacks on Manilla, Shanghai, Malaya, Thailand and Hongkong.

" 8 Britain and Dominions declare war on Japan.

" 10 H.M.S. *Prince of Wales* and H.M.S. *Repulse* are sunk.

" 23 First meeting of Anglo-U.S. War Council is held in Washington.

1942

January 3 Twenty-six Nations including Britain, the U.S.A., Russia, China, the Netherlands and India sign a joint declaration against Axis Powers.

" 23 Japs make air raid on Rangoon.

" 23–27 Japanese land in New Guinea at Lae; Japanese land in Soloman Islands.

" 25 Mahatma Gandhi's warning against storm which is gathering in the Indian economic situation, in an article in the *Harijan*.

" 27 Mr Churchill announces: (i) Combined Chiefs of Staff Committee to be set up in Washington; (ii) Pacific War Council to be set up in London; (iii) U.S. land and

		air forces to join British Forces in the United Kingdom. (iv) Dominions to be represented in the War Cabinet.
January	30	British withdraw to the Island of Singapore.
February	9	Marshal Chiang Kai-Shek arrives at Delhi.
"	12	New Delhi announces that India is invited to be represented in the War Cabinet and in the Pacific War Council.
"	15	Singapore falls.
"	17	British and Indian airmen are active over enemy positions in Burma.
March	7–9	Rangoon is evacuated and British forces are extricated from Pegu.
"	11	Mr Churchill announces the British War Cabinet's decision to send Sir Stafford Cripps to India.
"	23	Japs occupy Andaman Islands. Sir Stafford Cripps arrives in New Delhi.
"	29	Sir Stafford Cripps announces War Cabinet proposals at a Press Conference.
April	6	Japanese bomb India for the first time; make air attacks on Cocanada and Vizagapatam in Madras Presidency; Japanese land in Bongain Ville.
"	12	Sir Stafford Cripps leaves India. His mission fails.
"	18	American Technical Mission arrives in Delhi.
"	29	Lashio falls. Mandalay is evacuated. British retreat to India.
May	15	First British Forces retreating from Burma reach Indian Frontier.
"	26	Twenty-year Anglo-Soviet Treaty is signed in London, providing for all collaboration during and after the war.
June	10	War Resources Committee of the Viceroy's Council is announced.
"	11	The Duke of Gloucester arrives in India on an inspection tour of the Forces.
July	2	The Viceroy's Executive Council is enlarged. First Indian Defence Member is appointed.

		Indian representatives in the War Cabinet and Pacific War Council are announced.
August	8	A.I.C.C. passes 'Quit India' Resolution at Bombay.
		The Viceroy's Executive Council passes Resolution on the 'Quit India' Resolution.
,,	9	Mahatma Gandhi and other Congress leaders are arrested.
,,	14	Linlithgow-Gandhi correspondence on Gandhi's 5th fast commences.
,,	15	Mahàdev Desai passes away in the Aga Khan Palace, Poona.
September	10	Mr Churchill makes a speech in Parliament on the August disturbances.
December	12	The C.P. Government issues prohibitory order on Prof. Bhansali's fast.
,,	18	Hartal is observed by Bombay City and Provincial Newspapers as a protest against Bombay Government's prohibitory order on Prof. Bhansali's fast.
,,	28	Japs make first air raid on Calcutta.

1943

January	1	Black-out of all Government news in Indian newspapers begins.
,,	6	All India Newspapers observe Hartal as protest against Provincial Government's order on Prof. Bhansali's fast.
February	10	Mahatma Gandhi's twenty-one days' fast commences in the Aga Khan Palace.
,,	25	Mr Amery makes his speech in the Commons on Gandhiji's fast.
March	3	Gandhiji breaks his three weeks' fast.
May	4	Gandhiji writes to Mr Jinnah from detention camp for a meeting in response to the latter's open invitation to do so.
May (Early)		Influx of destitute villagers into Calcutta commences.
July (Early)		Actual starvation haunted destitute villagers and famished and dead men, women and

		children stalk pavements and footpaths of Calcutta.
July	14	Mr Amery's statement in Commons on the Bengal food situation.
,,	15	Gandhiji replies to Government on 'Congress Responsibility for the Disturbances in 1942-43'.
,,	28	Bengal Assembly debate on famine situation and Dr Mookerjee's detailed speech.
		First Press Note issued by Bengal Government appealing to the public to establish gruel kitchens for relief.
August	25	Lord Louis Mountbatten is appointed Supreme Allied Commander of South East Asia.
September	3	Allies land on the mainland of Italy. A detachment of Jodhpur infantry are the first Indians to set foot on the Italian mainland.
,,	11	Sir Jagadish Prasad's Memorandum to the Bengal Premier, Sir K. Nazimuddin on Bengal Famine.
October	12	First air raid on Madras is made.
	13	Sir J. P. Srivastava, Food Member to the Government of India announces decision of the Central Government 'to take supreme control of Indian food situation and to override Provincial Governments, if necessary.'
,,	15	Mr Amery declares 'grievous condition of famine' in Bengal.
,,	18	Lord Wavell assumes charge as Viceroy of India.
,,	19	Lord Linlithgow leaves Delhi.
November	9	U.N.R.R.A. agreement is signed in Washington.

1944

February	22	Srimati Kasturba Gandhi passes away in detention.
April	14	Bombay Explosion.

April	16	Lord Mountbatten transfers headquarters from Delhi to Kandy.
May	6	Mahatma Gandhi is released from detention.
June	6	Allies land in Northern France. 1,183 Indian sailors take part in the operations (as announced later).
,,	16	First flying bombs fall on Southern England.
July	20	Japanese retreat from Imphal. Attempt is made on Hitler's life.
August	9–27	Gandhi-Jinnah talks in Bombay take place.
,,	17	Japs are driven out of Manipur State.
September	12	Churchill-Roosevelt Conference begins at Quebec.
,,	25	Britain's £650,000,000 Social Security Scheme is announced.
October	9	Mr Churchill arrives at Moscow.
,,	19	Capture of Tiddim by Indian troops of the 14th Army is announced.
December	8	Afghan Military Mission arrives in Delhi.

1945

January	5	British and Indian troops of the 15th Indian Corps land on Akyab Island.
,,	7	Indian troops of the Fourth Corps enter Shwebe.
,,	12	Troops of the 15th Indian Corps land on Myeben peninsula, 32 miles from Akyab.
,,	22	First breach in land blockade of China—linking of Ledo and Burma Roads is announced.
February	6	World Trade Union Conference opens in London.
,,	12	Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin issue joint statement on Yalta Conference.
,,	20	White House officials announce that Mr Churchill and Mr Roosevelt met in Alexandria on their way back from Crimea to discuss Pacific War.
March	8	19th Indian Division enters Mandalay.
,,	20	Mandalay falls to the 14th Army.